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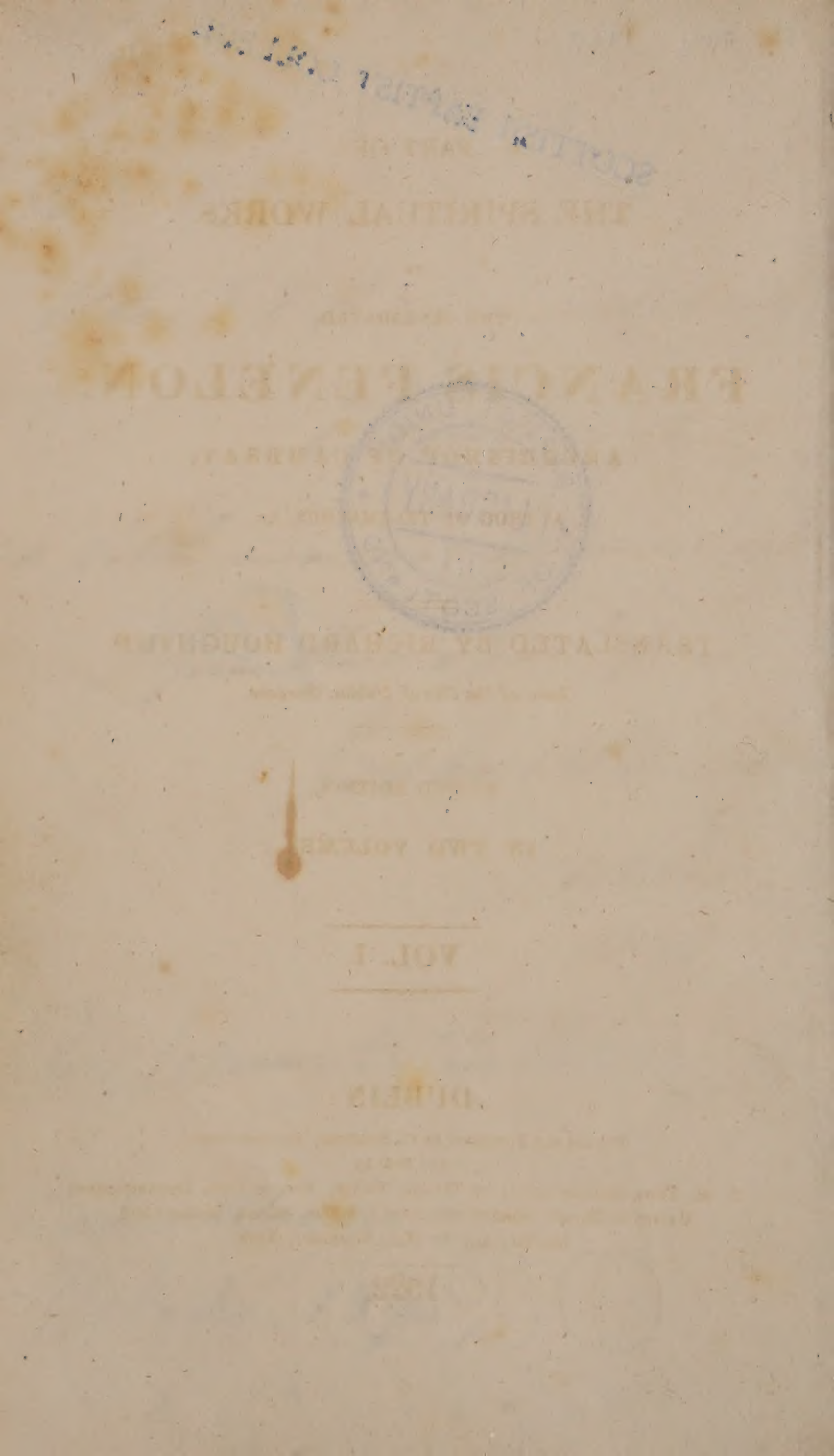

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THE SPIRITUAL WORKS

McLELLAN COLLECTION

OF
THE CELEBRATED

FRANCIS FENELON,

ARCHBISHOP OF CAMBRAY,

AUTHOR OF TELEMACHUS, &c.

TRANSLATED BY RICHARD HOUGHTON,

Late of the City of Dublin, Surgeon.

SECOND EDITION,

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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1822.

LIFE OF

FRANCIS DE SALIGNAC, DE LA MOTHE

FENELON,

PRECEPTOR TO THE PRINCES OF FRANCE, AND AFTERWARDS ARCHBISHOP AND DUKE OF CAMBRAY, PRINCE OF THE HOLY EMPIRE.

Translated from the French, and first printed with Notes at London, 1747.

THE account we now lay before the public, must be considered only as a very short abridgment. It will suffice, however, to give a just idea of the character and virtues of the Archbishop of Cambray. He was born at the Castle of Fenelon, in Perigord, on the sixth of August, 1651. He began his studies in the province, and at the university of Cahors. He finished them at Paris, under the name of the Abbé de Fenelon. His uncle, the Marquis de Fenelon, superintended his education there. He was a man distinguished by a great degree of merit and virtue. During the youth of Lewis XIV. he was a principal person concerned in the transactions that passed concerning duels. One single circumstance may enable us to pass a judgment upon his character. In making his compliments to M. de Harlay, with whom he lived in great familiarity, upon his nomination to the archbishopric of Paris, he added to it this reflection; *There is a considerable difference between the day wherein such a nomination draws upon you the compliments of*

the whole kingdom of France, and the day of your death, when you must give an account to God of your administration.

This uncle brought his nephew acquainted very early with a number of friends, who were persons of great weight in the world. They immediately found him a young man of extraordinary talents; and the idea they conceived of him, gave the first rise to a reputation, which was in a short time to be advanced to the highest degree. He was no sooner entered into priest's orders, than they conferred upon him the superiority of the Nouvelles Catholiques, and another community of females. His great talents for preaching, were displayed in the sermons and discourses which this office gave him frequent occasion to make. Those of his sermons which have been preserved, and of which there is a collection printed, were composed at this time. We must also refer to the same time, his Dialogues upon Eloquence in general, and upon that of the Pulpit in particular; which were not printed till after his death. The family having found the manuscript among his papers, written entirely with his own hand, caused it to be printed. There is in it a justness of taste, and a knowledge of the rules, which may serve as sure guides to judge of the compositions of the greatest masters of the art now in vogue. Preaching became afterwards so familiar to him, that he did not compose any more sermons. A very little preparation served him to form, in general, the plan of his discourse, and the order he designed to observe in it; after which he did no more than yield to the copiousness wherewith he abounded. It was an overflowing spring, which discharged itself upon his auditory; and his eloquence had the beautiful charm of reaching the heart to affect it, which is not ordinarily found in studied discourses.

Whilst he was Bishop, he preached regularly during Lent, in one of the churches in the city, and upon some solemn days in the cathedral, without giving the same sermons over again the following year. The same subject was constantly handled with a different turn by a fruitful genius, which had no need at any time to copy itself. He visited every parish in his diocese, both in the towns and country, without exception, and accompanied his visitation with instructions to the people; but of so many sublime and sacred discourses, there are now no remains, except what have been preserved in the hearts of his hearers. The dignity of the persons to whom he owed this respect, obliged him however to set down in writing the sermon he preached at the consecration of the Elector of Cologne, Joseph Clement of Bavaria. Except this piece of Christian eloquence, from his custom of preaching without notes, he has left behind him no other performances of this nature, besides the sermons of his youth we have already mentioned. Their beauty, and the interesting manner wherein the truths of the gospel are there handled, do fully demonstrate to us what he was in his earlier age, both as a Christian and an orator, and at the same time point out to us the great value of what we have lost.

It was also in the younger part of his life, that having contracted a strict friendship with a person of distinction, who had several daughters, he drew up for him at his request, his Treatise of the Education of Daughters. This discourse, with another entitled, The Office of Pastors, were the first productions of his pen that were made public. The rules he lays down for the education of daughters, and his manner of treating this subject, show how thoroughly acquainted the author was with the heart of man, and the incomparable talent he had for the education of youth. In

his treatise of the Office of Pastors, he lays down the same principles concerning the authority of the church, which he ever afterwards maintained.

To these great abilities, the young Abbé joined a kind of piety, to which he had been strongly inclined from his infancy, and which consisted in such a disinterestedness for himself, as to leave nothing to man, and ascribe all to God. Such principles did not permit him to pursue the common methods, which are practised by those who study to advance themselves in the world. M. de Harlay, at that time Archbishop of Paris, at first received him extremely well. But observing him not to be over-earnest in seeking his favour, he was offended at it, and said to him one day, "Sir, you have a mind to be forgotten, and you shall be so." Providence, however, did not suffer it. King Lewis XIV. having cast his eyes upon the Duke of Beauvilliers, whose great virtue was the example of the court, to make him governor to the princes his grand-children; this nobleman, who was the same person for whom he had drawn up his treatise of the Education of Daughters, caused his friend to be chosen preceptor. The choice of the Abbé de Fenelon for this important office, procured a very remarkable testimony of his virtue and impartiality, as it was given by that very M. Bossuet, Bishop of Meaux, who was afterwards his persecutor.—"Yesterday, Madam, I was wholly employed "upon the happiness of the church and state; to-day, I "have had leisure to reflect with more attention on your "joy; which has given me a very sensible pleasure. Your "father, my very good and deserving friend, was recalled "to my mind. I represented to myself, how pleased he "must be upon this occasion, in seeing a virtue shine forth, "which had concealed itself with so much care."—This letter was written by the Bishop to the Marchioness de la

Laval, the daughter of that uncle of the Abbé de Fenelon's we have already mentioned. It was dated at Germigny, the country house of the Bishops of Meaux, on the 9th of August, 1689.

The Abbé de Fenelon immediately entered upon his office of preceptor to the Duke of Burgundy, the eldest of the princes he was appointed to instruct. No education had ever produced so good an effect. France was just ready to reap the fruits of it, when an untimely death carried off the prince, whom such an instruction, as had been hitherto without example in a royal palace, had so happily formed for the felicity of the people. The large compass which the Abbé de Fenelon had taken into this instruction, led him to draw up those valuable pieces which are now left of him, and which one may always read without ever being weary. Wisdom there assumes all forms, in order to engage the heart of a young prince to the pursuit of virtue. It lays successively before his eyes, every particular of moment, that is supplied either by philosophy, the study of nature and its wonders, history, the poets, or fable, and the different characters of the most renowned persons, both among the ancients and moderns. And at the same time, as he thus instructs him in all that he ought to know, the incomparable master constantly directs the heart of his pupil to the love of a virtue which refers all to the Deity. With Telemachus, to use the expressions of the approbation of the most extraordinary of these compositions, "we learn an "inviolable attachment to religion, both in prosperity and "adversity; to love our parents and our country; to be kings, "citizens, friends, or even slaves, if fate will have it so.—Too "happy the nation, for whom this work may some day form "a Telemachus and a Mentor!" Mentor and the Prince, whom he had made a Telemachus, were then no more, when the approbator of the work expressed himself thus.

A Mentor could not live in the midst of a court, without being a spectacle there. The Abbé de Fenelon even became a favourite, but his favour was of an extraordinary nature. He was a favourite who never asked any thing either for himself or for any of his friends. He made no other use of his credit, than to eradicate the notions which the corrupters of kings instil into them, of their grandeur and their power. Six years had passed in this high favour, without his being thought of in the distributions which were daily made of ecclesiastical benefits. And indeed it is not easy, that any person should be thought of in such distributions, who takes no pains to push himself forwards, and joins practice with the precepts of a strict disinterestedness. The king however thought of him at last, and gave him a considerable abbey; and soon after nominated him to the archbishopric of Cambray. The Abbé de Fenelon did not consent to accept of his great post, till after the king had told him, that as the course of education was near at an end, the deserving persons he had under him might supply his absence. Upon this he yielded to the king's pleasure, and gave back into his hands at the same time the abbey, which had been given him some months before. The king seemed much surprised at it; he had not been accustomed to find such a degree of disinterestedness in his court; but the example was no other in the eyes of the person who gave it, than a common action, which did not deserve the commendation it received. A nephew, for whom he had a very great affection, and who is now the bishop of Xaintes, and the Abbé de Lanacron, a friend whom he dearly loved, were the only two that were under him about the princes. He took no pains to recommend either of them to the abbey he had quitted. They had both of them the same principles with himself, in being willing to leave all to the disposition of Providence, without any intermixture of human industry. Three years after they became victims to their attachment for him, were driven

from court, deprived of the salaries annexed to their employment, without any benefice, or other advantage, in having attended nine years upon the princes of France, except the honour of having been employed in their education; so strictly careful was he who could so easily have provided for them, during a favour which lasted so many years, to ask nothing either for himself, or for the persons that were dearest to him.

So pure a virtue was not to want the trial of adversity. The new Archbishop found himself insensibly involved in the persecution which was revived against a lady, whose prayer was brought under suspicion, and who had before been in trouble on that account. A life of the greatest purity, the constant practice of every virtue from her infancy, and the most holy exercises of devotion, were not able to secure Madam Guion from the malice of those who declared against her. The little enlargement we are obliged to give here upon the story of this lady, will not appear misplaced, in an account which has no other object than the life of the Archbishop of Cambray. It would not be sufficient, in short, for a man like him, the excellence of whose morals, in a time of the hottest persecution, his greatest enemies never ventured to call in question. It would not be enough, that those who have been most transported with fury against him in their most bitter invectives, should find themselves obliged, to prevent the indignation of the public, to acknowledge, as they still do to this day, that in this respect he was always free from the least reproach. Neither would his memory be justified, if Madam Guion herself had given the least cause to doubt of the constant regularity of her conduct, if she had written nothing but extravagancies, and had no other merit than of submitting to confess her errors, if in reality she had maintained any. It would always be an unpardonable weakness in an archbishop to have es-

teemed, and suffered his best friends to have confided in, a person of a suspicious conduct, and in whom nought else was to be seen but fanaticism. We should then be obliged to own frankly, that his veneration for her had been a blemish in his life. It is therefore requisite, that the public should find here at least something, whereby to form an idea of that lady's character, of the elevation of her soul, of the springs of the clamour that was raised against her, and of the purity of her life, which was confirmed to the last by the testimonies and confessions of those who had taken the most pains to prove her guilty. Such as are desirous to make a more particular enquiry into this affair, need only consult the writings of those times; and not excepting even those, which M. Bossuet, Bishop of Meaux, published under the odious title of "A Relation concerning Quietism," &c. of "Remarks," &c. provided the answers are compared with them, and the prelate confronted with the different manners, in which he has both thought and expressed himself concerning that lady, at different conjunctures. It is by this comparison, added to what has been said upon this subject, in the life of Madam Guion, written by herself, that we may be able to attain a thorough knowledge of the whole affair, and show on which side truth and candour are most to be found.

The rage against this lady was furiously increased, when certain persons of distinction about the court, were found to place their confidence in her. The sudden change of life in these persons, who before had been very conversant in the world, appeared to the directors, who were alarmed with the good they did not do, to be no other than the effect of being dangerously seduced.

The clamour was already begun, when the Abbé de Fenelon was nominated to the archbishopric of Cambray He was brought acquainted with this lady. The natural prejudice

against an extraordinary woman, who was become already suspected and persecuted upon that score, was changed into a singular veneration for her, as soon as he had examined her, and conversed with her himself. It was a surprizing sight to the court, to see the Archbishop indirectly attacked, and tottering in the King's favour, by an attempt to reflect upon him the furious zeal which was expressed against a person, whom he did not disown he had very much esteemed, and still continued to esteem; and yet he never undertook to defend her, but contented himself with constantly refusing to join with those, who from the condemnation they had made of some of her writings, proceeded to the most violent persecution of her person. When they pressed him to act farther against her, he made answer, that the errors they imputed to Madam Guion, could not be excused by the ignorance of her sex, that what they charged her with teaching, would have raised an horror in the grossest villager; that the imputation did not only relate to certain expressions of which she had not perceived the consequences, but amounted to a diabolical design, which, according to her accusers, was the soul of all she had written; that he had often seen her, as all the world knew; that he had esteemed her, and suffered her to enjoy the esteem of several eminent persons whose reputation was dear to the church, and who confided in him; that though he had not thoroughly read at that time all her writings, yet he neither could, nor ought to be wholly ignorant of them; that he had known enough to think it his duty to examine her very strictly; that he had often done it, at a time when, having nothing to fear, she was more open with him, more free, and more disposed to express her natural sentiments; that he had obliged her to explain what she thought upon the matters in debate; he had required her to explain the meaning of every one of the mystical terms she had used in her writings; and that he had always found the sense in which she understood them, to be

very innocent, and very catholic; that he had very narrowly observed her practice, and the counsels she gave to the most ignorant and unwary persons, and had never discovered the least footsteps of the hellish maxims that were ascribed to her. And how could he in conscience charge her with them, by authorizing, with an approbation, the defamations that were published against her? He owned that he did not comprehend the conduct of the Bishop of Meaux. On the one hand, this prelate was inflamed with indignation, if the impious system which he imputed to Madam Guion was ever so little called in question; on the other, he seemed himself to have thought very differently of her. This lady had freely submitted herself to a preceding examination, which, on her part, had been quite voluntary. During the course of this examination, the Bishop had writ him a long letter, wherein he had pointed out to him his objections to her prayer and experiences, minutely mentioning the several particulars which offended him in her writings, for she had put all of them into his hands without the least reserve: and at the same time acknowledging, "That he "could not disown, that he discerned something in her which "exceedingly affected him; and this was (he said) that insa-"tiable desire of crosses and reproaches, and the choice that "God made for her of certain humiliations and sufferings, "wherein his finger and his will seemed to be expressed." Is it usual to write thus of a person, whose writings after a thorough examination, should have no other tendency than to promote irregularity, and the most extravagant fanaticism? For it was this that M. de Meaux pretended afterwards to discover in them, when he attempted to reproach M. de Cambray with the monstrous errors he imputed to his friend. During this examination of pure confidence, he had made extracts out of the manuscripts which Madam Guion had put into his hands with so little reserve, and especially out of the account of her life, which she had written out of pure

obedience, and wherein her most secret dispositions were related with great ingenuity. These were the very extracts, which M. de Meaux had kept in his hands, and which in the heat of the dispute he was afterwards led to make use of by giving them odious and ridiculous turns, which without doubt he had not seen, "when he discerned something in the lady that very much affected him." The case was the same with the journies she had undertaken. She returned from them in 1686. In the first persecution raised against her, and which was soon after her return to Paris, she was taken into custody, and afterwards set at liberty, in 1688, by the King's order, when informed of her innocence. The affair had been public. This detention, the artifices made use of to bring it upon her, the journies which had preceded it, their motives, the great number of souls which had been drawn over to piety through her means, and what she was to suffer from men; all this was described at large, in the manuscript of her life, which she had put into the hands of M. de Meaux, and which he had read when he wrote the letter to him, wherein he told him, that "he could not dis-"own, but that he discerned something in her which very "much affected him." This letter was written in March, 1694, that is, several years after her return from all her travels, and her first persecution, which was over in 1688. It was six years after all this, that M. de Meaux acknowledged "the express finger of God," in all that she had to suffer, "and the choice that he made of certain crosses and "humiliations for her;" and that he discerned nothing more in those crosses and humiliations "than the insatiable desire "she had of them," wherewith he was edified. At the same time he had given her the communion with his own hand, and had allowed her the daily use of the sacraments, in his own diocese. Lastly, it was after having detained her six months at Meaux, whither she had voluntarily retired, in order to undergo a more strict examination, that he suffered

her to depart thence with a full attestation, bearing date in the month of July, 1695, without requiring any act from her, whereby she formally retracted any error whatsoever. In this attestation, the Bishop said, that "he continued her "in the participation of the sacraments, wherein he had found "her;" declaring, that he had not found her in any sort involved in the abominations of Molinos, or any other condemned opinions, and that he had not meant to imply it in the mention he had made thereof in his ordinance of the 16th of April, 1695. This ordinance, which he recalled, was that which contained the condemnation of two small books of Madam Guion's, that were the only ones then printed. M. de Meaux had required of her an act of submission to this censure; he had even dictated the terms of it to her, and made her say, that "she had never maintained any of "the errors mentioned in the said pastoral letter, having "always intended to write in a catholic sense, not imagining "then that any other could be put upon her words." The superior of the monastery at Meaux, had on her side likewise given her another attestation, signed by herself, and the principal persons of her community, wherein they certified, that "Madam Guion having resided six months in their "house, by the order and permission of the Bishop of Meaux, "their illustrious prelate and lord, she had not given them "the least pain or trouble during her residence there, but "very considerable edification; as they had observed in all "her conduct, and in all her words, great regularity, simplicity, sincerity, humility, mortification, Christian patience "and gentleness, with a true devotion, and regard for every "thing that is of faith; and that if the said lady was disposed "to make choice of their house, wherein to spend the rest of "her days in retirement, their community should esteem it as "a favour and satisfaction." This attestation, like that of the Bishop's, was drawn up in the month of July, 1695, and differs only in the date of a few days.

This was what passed at Meaux, after upwards of a year's examination, and eight years after Madam Guion's return from all her travels, which were so well known to M. de Meaux. Whence comes it, said the Archbishop of Cambray, that so great remissness preceded so much rigour? For his own part, he had never found any other than a candid and docile disposition in the lady, so as to be always ready to submit to others, the judgment of her own experiences, and even to condemn them, if disapproved by them; for which reason he could not in conscience join with her accusers. He farther added, "the bishops who condemn her, have "done it by writings which they have published; they have "since confined her, and loaded her with ignominy; I have "never said one single word, either to justify or excuse her, "or to alleviate her present condition; and is not that going "a great way, considering all that I know? The least I "can do to an unfortunate person, whose conversation was "always edifying to me, is to keep silence whilst others con-"demn her." But this silence was not sufficient for those who wanted of him a public approbation, which might serve to justify their censures against her writings, and their severity towards her person. His constant refusal provoked them, and became an occasion of their falling upon himself. It was already seen, by their manner of proceeding against Madam Guion, that he was rather the object they aimed at than herself. To stop the mouths of all who sought to render him suspected of illusion, he determined to publish a book, wherein the author laid open his sentiments very clearly, cut off all pretext of including him in an affair, with which he could have nothing further to do, unless there were some objections to be made to his book; and this chanced to be the case. All the expressions in it were hardly interpreted, that they might have something to find fault with. The inclination of mankind, who are always disposed to grow tired of a virtue incapable of swerving from the truth,

was favourable to those who imputed dangerous sentiments to the preceptor of the princes of France. The king saw a bishop of the age and reputation of M. de Meaux in the posture of a penitent begging pardon of him, for not having sooner acquainted him with the fanaticism of his brother bishop. The non-compliance of the accused Archbishop, who refused to abandon his book, was represented as a proof of his obstinacy in the errors they imputed to him. Upon which he was disgraced. They could not, however, refuse him the liberty of appealing to the judgment of the pope his superior. But at the same time he received orders to retire from the court, from whence he departed, never more to return "Be under no concern about me," says he, in a letter to one of his friends, "the affair of my book is carried "to Rome. If I am mistaken, the authority of the Holy "See will undeceive me, which is what I seek for, with an "humble and resigned heart. If I have expressed myself "amiss, they will correct my expressions.—If the pope "condemns my book, if it so please God, I will be the "first to condemn it, and to issue out an edict to forbid the "reading of it.—I am going to Cambray, having sacrificed "to God, from the bottom of my heart, all that I am capa- "ble of sacrificing to him. Permit me to exhort you to "enter into the same spirit. Nothing worldly or temporal "has had any share in what I have done for the doctrine I "have judged to be true; nor have I omitted to lay before "the pope any of the reasons, which may support that doc- "trine. Enough has been done on my part; it belongs to "God to do the rest, if it is his cause I have defended. "Let us neither regard the designs of men nor the steps they "take; it is God alone that we should look up to in all this. "Let us be the children of peace, and peace will rest upon "us; if it be bitter, it will be only the more pure. Let us "not mar the uprightness of our intentions by any obstinacy, "any passionate warmth, any human industry, any over-

"earnest desire to justify ourselves. Only let us give an "account of our faith, let us correct ourselves if we have "need of it, and let us bear correction patiently, even "though we should not deserve it. As to you, Sir, your "part in the affair is silence, submission and prayer. Pray "for me, upon so pressing an occasion. Pray for the "church, which suffers these scandals.—Perfection is be- "come suspected; so much was not required to divert remiss "and conceited Christians from it. Disinterested love seems "a source of illusion, and abominable impiety. Christians, "under a pretext of security and caution, have been accus- "tomed to seek God only through motives of self-interest "and happiness. Souls which have made the greatest pro- "ficiencies, are forbidden to serve God through the motive, "by which it has hitherto been wished, that even sinners "should return from their wicked ways, I mean, the good- "ness of God infinitely amiable. I know the terms of 'pure "love' and 'abandoning' are abused; I know that hypo- "crites, under such specious names, subvert the gospel. "But pure love is, notwithstanding, no less the perfection of "Christianity; and it is the worst remedy that can be, to "endeavour to abolish what is perfect, only to hinder it from "being abused. God can better provide in this case than "men. Let us humble ourselves, and keep silence; and "instead of reasoning upon prayer, let us take care that we "pray. It is thus that we defend ourselves; it is in silence "that our strength will lie.

With such dispositions M. de Cambray thought only of waiting peaceably for the judgment of Rome upon his book; but those who had begun to persecute him, did not judge it convenient to act in the same manner. He found himself violently attacked by three bishops at once, who were the same that had published their censures upon the small printed books of Madam Guion The attack was too vio-

lent to allow him to keep silence; it was a duty owing to himself, owing to the defence of his cause at Rome, not to countenance the reproaches of his adversaries by his silence. But he constantly confined himself to a defence abounding with moderation, and to such explications of his sentiments, as justified his doctrines.

M. de Meaux had suffered himself to be carried so far in the heat of the dispute, that he saw himself abandoned in an essential point, by almost all the divines of the school, and particularly by the Bishop of Chartres himself, though otherwise united in interest with him in this quarrel. They found that M. de Meaux, in order to establish hope, had destroyed charity. M. de Cambray was advised to make a diversion, by attacking the books of his principal adversary at Rome, as the latter had fallen upon his. The pious Archbishop made answer, that he had wrote his book merely out of the necessity they had laid him under of distinguishing the true spirituality from the false, and to show how far he was, by defending the one, from countenancing the other; but that he too much lamented the scandal of the dispute under which the church groaned, to have any inclination to perpetuate it, by recriminating against his brother.

In the mean time, the writings both for and against the book of the maxims were multiplied. Those of the Archbishop were so drawn up, as to make his adversaries repent that they had laid him under a necessity of publishing his defences. They did him, by this means, contrary to their expectation, a considerable service. We shall see, in the following letter, of the month of May, 1698, the answer he gave to M. Brisacier, of the foreign missions, who had wrote to him after the publication of the first of his defences, in aggravation of the extremities to which the matter was reduced by them.

"Sir, it was unwillingly, and under extreme necessity, "that I wrote to defend my faith, when violently attacked. "I delayed the affair at Rome for two months, refusing "constantly to print my defences, and satisfying myself with "sending them thither in manuscript. At last I was informed, "that it was usual at the tribunal of the holy office, to print "the productions; that my manuscripts could neither be so "legible, nor so correct, as the judgment in so nice and "important an affair required; that they must be in the hands "of a great number of people, and communicated to my "adversaries; and that thus it would be impossible to keep "them secret; and that, lastly, my answers ought to be as "public as the accusations. I then yielded to the necessity "of printing them; but I was so averse to expose this scene "to the public, that my printed tracts were sent to Rome "above six weeks before I could resolve to publish them in "France. When they were published at Rome, and I "found that my adversaries posted up and dispersed their "performances against me in every part of my diocese, I "thought it then my duty not to be reserved in my own "vindication, nor to suffer myself to be defamed in the midst "of my own flock.

"As to the manner in which I have wrote them, I may "be mistaken, and herein submit to the reader's judgment; "but as, in my own opinion, I was neither influenced by "passion or resentment, whilst I was writing them, so I "think I have not expressed any indecent warmth in any of "them. I took great care to suppress whatever did not "appear to me essential to my cause. I have behaved "respectfully to the persons who treated me otherwise; but "I could not avoid taking notice of some particulars, which, "against my inclination, reflected upon them, as they were "matters of importance, either to the doctrine, or the trial. "If there is any passage, wherein my cause is not concerned,

" and which offends either against truth or charity, or the " respect which is due to my brethern, I will make them a " public reparation, without requiring the like from them, " though manifestly due to me, for the injurious and abusive " treatment they have given me in their writings.

" Let but any one compare without prejudice, their words " with mine. Their expressions are all artful, haughty and " insulting; their very writings, which they would have pass " for mild ones, are full of ingenious turns to blacken me, " under a show of civility towards me. For my part, I " have confined myself to expose their sophistry, to restore " the text of my book, which they have misquoted, and to " confute the tenets which destroy charity, which confound " the order of nature with that of grace, and which over- " throw all medium betwcen supernatural virtues and vicious " concupiscence. All the lovers of sound doctrine, who " dread novelties, have reason to be pleased with me, for " having opposed so dangerous a conspiracy against the " whole school. Lastly, I have shown, that my adversaries " have clearly understood, that the interest which a man " has in being saved is very different from the salvation itself; " and that they have approved in other authors, what they " would have accounted impious in my book. And now, " Sir, are not all these particulars essential to my defence? " Ought I to suppress them, for fear of opening the eyes of " the public in what concerns the conduct of my brethren? " Ought I to conceal the wrongs they have done me, and " suffer myself to be defamed, as a second Molinos, who is a " plain teacher of blasphemies? Had I not frequently de- " clared, that they would at last compel me to vindicate " myself in a manner which would retort back upon my " adversaries? Did they vouchsafe to listen to me? Have " they not taken pains to carry matters to extravagant " lengths, in order to render all accommodation impossible?

"Have they not taken my patience for a weakness without "resource? Have they not reduced me to such a state, that "I could not have vindicated myself from horrible impiety, "and an inexcusable despair, unless I laid open the injustice "of the accusation in the face of the whole church? Was "it right, to throw me into these extremities against my own "inclination, and then complain of them as though they had "no share in them? Any other person but myself, I dare "venture to say, Sir, would demand a censure to be passed "on M. de Meaux's books, and a public reparation for "the grievous accusations they have groundlessly brought "against me? The less I demand such a reparation, the "more is it due to the church from my brethren. For "myself, I go no farther than to justify my belief, and they "must blame themselves for having reduced me to such a "condition, that I cannot prove myself not to be impious, "but by proving the odiousness of their proceedings against "me. If the truth simply told in its natural force, when "delivered with mildness, with respect, and under the most "pressing necessity that ever a bishop was laid, shall offend "the nice ears of those who have plainly laid him under that "necessity, what can be said to them?

"When they shall be disposed to keep silence, I shall "also gladly keep it; for in the midst of these wordy wars, "I breathe nought but peace, and a conclusion of the scan- "dal. But the more they write, the more obliged I shall "be to prove clearly their injurious treatment, which I "could wish it were in my power to conceal. If after having "wrote so much, they can only repeat what has been already "said, they will do no harm to their cause by being silent "hereafter. According to rule, Sir, as you know, the "accusers who have been the first to speak, should be also "the first to hold their tongues. If, on the other hand, they "have any new proofs to urge, or any new turns to give to

"the old ones they have already produced, it is but just "that I should be allowed time to make a reply to them. "The accused ought to speak last, especially when he is a "bishop, whom they would convict of impiety in the face "of the whole church. It may be seen by the dispatch, "wherewith I have already answered the principal points in "the last volume of M. de Meaux, how little disposed I "am either to perplex the question or prolong the dispute. "I hope, by God's assistance, that my adversaries will ad- "vance nothing so specious, either in point of doctrine or "fact, as not to be confuted by me upon very good reasons. "For my part whatever happens, I more than ever submit "all my works to the Holy See, with a docility without re- "serve, and without distinction of fact and right. I wish "those who have wrote against me were as submissive, and "as tractable, with respect to the tenets which they have "advanced. Judge, Sir, by the freedom wherewith I an- "swer you, how much I honour you, and with what respect "I receive your advice concerning the temper and patience "I stand in need of. Pray to God that he would grant "them me, I beg of you, and M. de Tiberge, to whom "I send my respects, and believe me to be, with the sin- "cerest regard, &c."

The affair lasted near two years at Rome. His adversaries were supported with all the credit that their situation in France could give them. And they made use of it with so much the less reserve, as they were provoked to see the Archbishop, though in disgrace, make no abatement of his resolution in the defence of his cause; that not only the public was inclined to favour the persecuted side, but that there were also divided sentiments at Rome concerning the book they had so highly traduced. Of ten examiners, that were chosen to deliberate concerning it, there were five who declared in favour of it; and among these, some persons of the greatest

character and distinction, who have been since honoured with the purple. They had then recourse to a blow, which was judged necessary to let them see at Rome how much the court of France, which openly solicited the condemnation of the book, had the affair at heart. They prevailed on the king to dismiss the Abbé de Beaumont, the Archbishop of Cambray's nephew, the Abbé de Langaron, his very old friend, and Messieurs Du Puy and de l'Echelle, whose attachment to him had remained firm notwithstanding his disgrace, and the danger of their being involved in it, from their attendance on the princes his grand-children. They disposed of the Archbishop's apartment at Versailles, which until this time had not been done; and both himself, and those who were dismissed upon this occasion, were struck off from the state list; and denied the salaries which were usually given to such persons during life, as had been honoured with any share in the education of the princes of France. The same treatment would have farther extended to some others of the most valuable persons about the court, if the solicitors of this affair had found credit enough to have carried it to the utmost lengths that they desired. Nothing can enable us to form a better judgment of the temper which the Archbishop of Cambray maintained in the midst of so violent a storm, than the following letter, which he wrote to the Duke of Beauvilliers, at the time when it raged most furiously against him.

" I cannot avoid telling you, my good duke, what I have " at my heart. Yesterday I spent the day, which was the " feast of St. Lewis, in devotion and prayer for the king. " If my prayers were good, he will be sensible of it, for I " prayed very heartily. I did not ask for him any temporal " prosperity; for of that he has enough. I only begged that " he might make a good use of it, and that amidst such " great success, he might be as humble, as though he had

" undergone some deep humiliation. I wished he might not " only be the father of his people, but withal the arbiter of " his neighbours, the moderator of all Europe, so as to " secure the tranquillity of it, and lastly, the protector of the " church. I begged that he might not only go on to fear " God and respect religion, but that he might also love " God, and feel how light and easy his yoke is to those who " bear it less through fear than love. I never found in my- " self a greater degree of zeal, or if I may venture to use " the expression, of affection to his person. Though " I am full of acknowledgement, it was not the good " he has done me that then moved me. Far from being " under any uneasiness at my present situation, I would " have offered myself with joy to God, to merit the sanc- " tification of the king. I even considered his zeal against " my book as a commendable effect of his religion, and a " just abhorrence of whatever has to him the appearance " of novelty. I looked upon him as an object deserving " the favour of God. I called to mind his education with- " out solid instruction, the flatteries which have surrounded " him, the snares laid for him in his youth, the profane " counsels that were given him, the distrust that was with so " much pains instilled into him against the excesses of cer- " tain professors of devotion, and the artifice of others ; and " lastly, the perils of greatness, and such a multiplicity of " nice affairs. I own, that with all these things in view, " notwithstanding the great respect that is due to him, I had " great compassion for a soul so much exposed. I judged " his case deserved to be lamented, and I wished him a " more plentiful degree of mercy to support him in so for- " midable a state of prosperity. I heartily prayed St. Lewis " to obtain for his grandson, the grace to imitate his virtues. " I represented his majesty to myself, as humble, conside- " rate, weaned from all earthly enjoyments, thoroughly " possessed with the love of God, and placing his consola-

" tion in the hope of a glory and a crown infinitely more " desirable than his own; in a word, I represented him to " myself as another St. Lewis. In all this I had not, as I " apprehended, the least interested view; for I was disposed " to remain all my life deprived of the comfort of seeing his " majesty in this state, provided he was in it. I would have " consented to a perpetual disgrace, provided I knew that " the king was entirely after God's own heart. I only " desire that he may have solid virtues, and such as are suit- " able to the duties of his station. Thus, my good duke, I " yesterday employed my festival. I prayed also most " heartily for our young prince, for whose salvation I would " give up my life with joy. Lastly, I prayed for the prin- " cipal persons who are about the king, and wished you all " the renewal of grace in the difficult times wherein you live. " For my own part, I am at peace, in the midst of almost " continual sufferings. By casting scandal upon me, they " shall not, by God's will, exasperate me, neither shall they " discourage me; they will not make me an heretic, by " saying that I am one. I have a greater abhorrence of " novelty, than those who seem so much to start at it. I " am more firmly attached to the church. I thank God, I " breathe nothing but sincerity, and submission without " reserve. After laying my reasons before the pope, my " conscience will be discharged, and I shall have nothing " more to do than to be silent and obey. They shall never " see me, as some others have done, seek for distinctions to " elude the censures of Rome. There would have been no " occasion to have gone thither, if the affair had been carried " on with equity, fair dealing, and Christian charity, which " they owed to their brother. I pray God to undeceive " me, if I am under a mistake, and if I am not, that he will " open the eyes of those who have confided too much in " passionate persons."

The condemnation of the book, so powerfully solicited at Rome, came at last; not indeed as the Archbishop's adversaries required, with the qualifications which Rome reserves for the books she finds to be heretical; but such, however, as made them to triumph in the humiliation of the author. He experienced upon this occasion, how vain is the dependance upon human prudence and policy, which the purest virtue in time can hardly escape some small degree of in a court, and which had led him so far to consult his own interest, as to decline the taking any part in the cause of his friend. This wisdom did not prevent the storm, which was first raised against her, from falling upon him, against whom they intended it, nor from involving him at last in a disgrace which he at first apprehended he might have avoided. It even so fell out, that the little books of Madam Guion, about which the noise first was made, and which nobody undertook to defend against the bishops who had censured them, continued in the state they were, whilst the judgment of Rome regarded only the book of the Archbishop of Cambray. They could not, however, prevail upon the Holy See to include the pieces he wrote in his vindication within the condemnation. They urged, in vain, that the author had himself declared in his defences, that if his book was understood according to the sense which his adversaries put upon it, and the consequences they drew from it, it would be from beginning to end impious, sacrilegious, and heretical; that the not assigning any of those qualifications to the book and propositions condemned, which himself had pronounced, and at the same time, the not comprehending his defences in the condemnation, was visibly charging his adversaries with having proceeded too far in their imputations against him; notwithstanding, Rome persisted in her resolution to pronounce no judgment against what the Archbishop had urged in the course of his dispute, either in his own vindication, or in the explanation of his

doctrine. They even debated about terminating the contest only by making canons, which should explain what was to be held with relation to the matter contested. This was what the Pope was very much inclined to, with a considerable part of the Roman Church; but upon the sight of this project, they made so loud a clamour about the necessity of satisfying France, which demanded a judgment, that the design of ending the affair by the publication of the projected canons fell to the ground. As to the Archbishop, as soon as he knew that Rome had spoke, he gave himself wholly up to finish his sacrifice by the most absolute submission. "What you send me word you have done in obe-"dience to the Pope, by parting with my book," says he in a letter to the same Duke de Beauvilliers, his friend, "is "very edifying to me, and by no means surprising; I know "your attachment to a strict obedience, nor could I expect "any other conduct from you. You know very well, Sir, "that I never valued or countenanced any piety, which has "not this solid foundation. For my part, I endeavour to "bear my cross with humility and patience. By God's "grace I remain in peace, in the midst of sorrow and bit-"terness. Amidst so many troubles I have one consolation, "of little consequence in the eyes of the world, but a solid "comfort to those who seek God with sincerity, and that "is, my conduct is entirely fixed, nor have I any thing "more to deliberate upon; all that is left for me to do is, to "submit and be silent; and this is what I have ever desired. "My only business now, is to settle the terms of my sub-"mission; the shortest, the most simple, the most absolute, "and the most remote from all restriction, are such as please "me the best; my conscience is discharged in that of my "superior. In all this, far from considering it as brought "upon me by my adversaries, I look not on any man; I see "only the hand of God, and am content with what he does. "I am sometimes tempted to smile at the apprehensions

" which some zealous persons express of me, that possibly " I may not be able to resolve upon a submission. Some- " times I am importuned with long letters of exhortation, " advising me to submit, and telling me how glorious such " an humiliation will be, and what an heroic action I shall " do by it. This, indeed, is somewhat teazing, and I am " tempted to say within myself, what is it then that I have " done to these people, that they should think I shall find so " much difficulty in preferring the authority of the Holy See " to my own weak understanding, and the peace of the " church to my book? Yet, I see plainly, they have rea- " son to suppose that I have a great deal of imperfection " and unwillingness to do an act of humiliation. And thus " I pardon them very freely, and even go so far as to thank " them for their fears and exhortations. As to difficulty, in an " act of full and absolute submission, I must frankly own " to you, that I find none. The act was drawn up the day " after I received the news, but I thought it my duty to " suspend the execution of it, till such times as I knew how " to proceed in form. Bulls are not acknowledged in France " till after they are passed in Parliament. I know not whe- " ther the same form is to be observed in a brief, which " contains a doctrinal judgment against an Archbishop. In " doubt of this, I suspend my mandate; for no one, what- " ever they may say, is a more zealous Frenchman than " myself. As soon as I know the rule, my act shall appear. " Be pleased to take notice, Sir, I have not received the " judgment of the Pope, either from Rome, or from the " Nuncio. But indeed, I will not lose a moment, as soon " as I shall be assured that I do not transgress the usages of " France. I have no consolation but in obedience; and if " they had known my sentiments in this respect, they would " never have had the vain alarms they have suffered them- " selves to fall into.

" As to the Bishop of Meaux, I own it is impossible for " me to conceive how he could tell you, that he *should* " *think himself blameable, both in the sight of God and* " *man, if he in the least doubted of the integrity of my* " *heart, and the sincerity of my submission.* Has he " forgot the frightful double-dealing, he has so often charged " me with in the face of the whole church, even so lately " as in the last printed piece he published against me? " Fifteen days cannot have changed me into an honest man. " However, the meaning of his words is not our present " business, and I leave that matter to be settled between " God and himself. He and I now have no longer any con- " tention. I very sincerely pray for him, and wish him all " that may be wished for those whom we love according to " God."

This letter was written the twenty-ninth of March, 1699, and was followed, on the ninth of April, with the publication of the Archbishop's mandate.

It was with an heart full of the noble simplicity, and disposition to comply, without weakness, which are so visible in this letter, that its generous author was able, without departing from the integrity of his submission, to refuse going farther than the express judgment of the Holy See, which had pronounced no sentence against the books he had written in his own vindication. They determined however in France, not to leave him without mortification on that score. In the provincial assemblies, which were held by the several Archbishops throughout the kingdom for the reception of the brief, there were not wanting certain bishops, who proposed to offer a petition to the king, that he would be pleased to issue out an order for the suppression also of all that the author had written in its defence. And yet there were others, who declared that they could not approve

the carrying matters so high against an Archbishop, who deserved nothing but commendation from them; but these were the smallest number, and the suppression was ordered in France. The assembly of the province of Cambray was not more favourable to their Archbishop. He stood in need of a resolution like his own, and all the presence of mind he was master of, to oppose in the assembly, which was held in his own palace, the suggestions that were made to turn his submission to the judgment of Rome into a retraction of all that he had urged in vindication of his doctrine. One of the bishops in the assembly attempted to maintain, that the judgment pronounced against the Book of Maxims, extended to the condemnation of the pieces which had been wrote in its defence. The Archbishop courageously caused the reasons to be inserted in the report of the assembly, which hindered him from acknowledging that consequence. Thus joined he resolution with a boundless submission to the judgment of the head of the church. The same greatness of soul which made him so firm, led him likewise to yield without resistance to whatever was regular. He drew up the conclusion, as president of the assembly, with the same tranquility as if the affair had concerned another person. The purport of it was, that the king should be desired to order the suppression of what he had written in his own defence. But though he thus discharged what the rules of the assembly required from his ministry, against himself, he remained unmoveable as to his own sentiments; he caused it to be inserted, that in concluding for this petition, he acted only as president, according to the plurality of voices, and *contrary to his own opinion.* He declared at the same time, that he should be as ready to give up his apologetical performances as the book itself, if the Holy See found any defect in his submission. For such was the character of the piety, that restrained this vast genius, that it bade him to close his eyes upon all the glimmerings of human under-

standing, to seek truth only in the humility, obedience, and simplicity of faith. This was the source of that submission, which deserves only to be admired, as it gives glory to the divine principle, from whence it sprung. But the Holy See, whose judgment was his rule, was so far from demanding more of him, that it found what he had already done, highly deserving of its commendation.

The year following, there was held an assembly of the Clergy of France, wherein the province of Cambray is not included. M. Bossuet, the Bishop of Meaux, was above minding what the public should think, when they saw him take pen in hand to give an account of his own quarrel, by virtue of a commission granted for that purpose. He chose rather to let them think what they pleased of a relation drawn up by the principal party himself, than to give up to another, the office of penning the memorial, which was to preserve in the annals of the clergy, the remembrance of an affair, wherein it was so much for his own reputation, that posterity should see it in the light which he put upon it. The Archbishop of Cambray could not fail of being represented there as a man recovered from error to truth. M. de Meaux there displayed at large the monstrous opinions which he had imputed to the Archbishop of Cambray, during the course of the dispute; as if the latter had not shown an hundred times, that he had attributed to him what he had never thought. At the same time, he termed the submismission of his adversary to the judgment pronounced at Rome, "a sudden and exemplary change, which had sur- "prised," he said, "the enemies of the church." What had passed in the provincial assembly at Cambray, concerning the books written by the Archbishop in his own vindication, did not hinder him from speaking upon that of a submission, which he found at the same time to be *absolute*, and *without reserve*. This was visibly to

destroy, with one hand, what he had raised with the other. How could the submission appear to M. de Meaux to be *absolute*, and *without reserve*, unless he tacitly owned himself the purity of the doctrine that was largely explained in the said vindication, which the author had refused to censure, as it was going beyond the judgment pronounced at Rome? But if this doctrine was pure, how blameable must M. de Meaux have thought himself for having so violently opposed it in the course of the dispute? How, lastly, could he reconcile to himself the representing the Archbishop of Cambray as suddenly changed, and calling his submission *absolute*, and *without reserve*, when the Archbishop in his provincial assembly persisted in not giving up the doctrine contained in his defences, and himself, the Bishop of Meaux had always openly rejected the explications therein delivered? But M. de Meaux was desirous that his own relation, inserted in the annals of the Clergy of France, should serve there to canonize his conduct against one of his brethren, whom he had represented as a man unhappily fallen into monstrous errors, from whence he was recovered. To this end it was requisite to represent him as a man who had "surprised the enemies of the church, by a sudden change" of principles, though he had so lately declared in the verbal process of the provincial assembly, held in his own diocese for the reception of the brief, "that he could not acknow-"ledge against his conscience, that he had ever believed any "of the errors which had been charged upon him." It was requisite to treat the submission of the Archbishop as an unexpected event, "which had surprised the enemies of the "church;" though he did no more than what he had continually declared he would do, as soon as the Pope should pass the sentence. It was requisite to join together in the same piece the condemnation of Molinos, which had passed in France, upon occasion of the little books and person of Madam Guion, and the mischief which had been renewed

" by an event which could not be too much deplored, the " publication of the book which the Archbishop of Cam- " bray had sent abroad into the world." So that, according to this relation of M. de Meaux, one would be apt to believe what those, who read only what he has written, do still imagine, that the whole affair was one and the same thing with the quietism condemned in Molinos. M. de Meaux might well be master of the assembly, to be able so to misrepresent such recent facts. In the brief of condemnation passed at Rome there was no mention of Molinos, nor were the characters given to the Book of Maxims, or to any of the propositions extracted from it, which could not have been spared, if there had been found in it any doctrine, deserving to be fulminated as an abominable heresy. M. de Meaux himself had declared five years before, as we have seen above in the attestation he had given to Madam Guion in July, 1695, " that not finding her in any respect involved " in the abominations of Molinos, or any other condemned " opinions, he had not intended to comprehend her in the " mention that had been made thereof by him in his ordi- " nance of the 16th of April last." This attestation, and the other testimonies of esteem, which he had given himself to the virtue of that lady, and which he had suffered to be given her under his eyes in his own episcopal city, were notoriously known. He could not therefore avoid being a little upon his guard, when he was to speak of her again. " For as to the abominations that were looked upon to be " the consequences of her principles, they were never ques- " tioned, and by her own declaration were held by her in " abhorrence." These very words are to be found in the relation inserted in the acts of the clergy of the year 1700, and concerning which we must always be mindful that they were penned by M. de Meaux. The following likewise are to be seen there concerning the first detention of that lady in 1688. " A certain woman had composed the treatises enti-

" tled, A Short Way, and A Mystical Interpretation of the " Song of Songs. The late Archbishop of Paris (Harlay) " sent her into a monastery, where there were some proceed- " ings against her, of which now no footsteps are to be " found." From this confession the conclusion is easy to be drawn. For, in short, if any thing had resulted from these proceedings, besides an entire justification of Madam Guion, would they have been so far lost, as not to have had the least footsteps of them recoverable? They were made by the Archbishop's officers; and instead of being carried away from the archives of the archbishopric, or its officiality, if any thing had appeared besides the innocence of the person accused, it would have been the Archbishop's interest to have kept them there, to serve as a testimony against a lady, whom he had caused to be confined. When the persecution was renewed against her, he would have been the first to publish a censure in October, 1694, against the two little books of that lady. This was what he did not, even though he had kept her confined six years before, and though these two little books had been printed for some time. We cannot therefore imagine, that, with a dislike so ready to revive upon the first occasion, he would have suffered such a trial to have been lost, if any thing had occurred in it to the lady's disadvantage. It was still less probable, that this should have happened under the pontificate which immediately followed. The new Archbishop had censured the two little books, in like manner as his predecessor, some few months only before his translation from the bishopric of Chalons, to the archbishopric of the capital. From that time Madam Guion had done nothing but pass from one prison to another, first shut up at Vincennes, after that in a nunnery at Vaugirard, and last of all in the Bastille, when matters ran high against M. de Cambray, and they were minded publicly to turn against him the spectacle of his friend confined in prison as a criminal.

In the mean time she had been examined again and again, without any kind of pity, in order to find her guilty, could it possibly have been done. Can we imagine, that, if the proceedings against her during her first confinement in 1688, had contained any thing to her prejudice, they would not have been at least recorded? It is notwithstanding after all this that M. de Meaux himself, writing in 1700 a relation, which was to preserve in the annals of the clergy an account of what concerned Madam Guion, is obliged to own, that the least footsteps of those proceedings were not left remaining; and acknowledges also, a few lines lower, that as to the abominations which were looked upon as the consequences of her principles, they were never questioned, and by her own declaration were held "by her in abhorrence." But could they be assured "of the abhorrence that she "said she held them in," if they had never been questioned? It appeared farther by the same account, by the attestations which M. de Meaux had given her, by divers acts which they had required of her, and wherewith they were satisfied, and by the preference of another's judgment to her own, which they had caused her to make with great simplicity, that she had been always very submissive in what related to her writings. Why then was she imprisoned, and continued to be kept in the Bastille, where she lay confined at the very time this assembly of the clergy was held in 1700? For it was not till about two years after, that she was at last set at liberty. At first they sent her home to her family, and not long after gave her leave to retire to Blois. The oblivion, wherein she lay there to the day of her death, and the retired life she led there for a great number of years, are fresh proofs, that if she had made a noise in the world, it was not through any inclination she had so to do. Affronts, imprisonments, reproaches, and the hatred of mankind, to her always appeared as favours. In this light she considered them, not only in speculation, but even at the time when

most she suffered them. "That insatiable thirst after the "roughest crosses," which had edified M. de Meaux himself, though so much prejudiced against spirituality, made her free in the midst of chains; it changed the heaviness of her imprisonment in the Bastille into songs, wherein she chanted forth the happy sallies, which the transport of her love for her God inspired her with.

The Archbishop of Cambray saw from the remotest part of his diocese what they were continuing to do against him, and bore it in peace and silence. A writer who was grown famous amongst those of his party, F. Gerberon, offered to publish a discourse in justification of his faith. He asked only his consent, and that he would contribute to the expense of the impression. But to this he made answer, "As dili- "gent as I was to write in my own defence before the judg- "ment of Rome, so resolved am I since that judgment, to "be silent, to suffer in peace, and give up my reputation to "Providence. You have read without doubt my letter upon "the twelve propositions, which several of the doctors of "Paris had judged worthy of censure. I suppose that you "have also read the collection of three and thirty proposi- "tions, which I endeavoured to justify by the authorities of "the saints. The true meaning of what I intended to write "is there explained. These works, and what else I have "wrote in my own vindication, have been seen at Rome, at "Paris, and in all other places. I have protested before God "in all these writings, that they have contained the utmost "of my belief, and that I never intended to countenance any "of the errors which have been imputed to me. Since "the judgment passed at Rome, I have repeated the same "solemn declaration in the report of our provincial "assembly, which is no less public than the reports "of the other provinces, or even than the acts of "the general assembly of the clergy of France. Af- "ter so many eclaircissements, what further can be added

" than useless repetitions? What duplicity is there in this con-
" duct? I had rather die than defend either directly or indi-
" rectly, a book which I have condemned without restriction
" and from the bottom of my heart, in compliance with the
" Holy See. Whatever I should write concerning my own
" personal sense, setting aside the text of the book, would
" be looked upon as a bye-method to rekindle the war, and
" re-enter into the defence of my work. It is neither just
" nor edifying for an author to be perpetually employing the
" church in his personal disputes, and chusing rather to con-
" tinue the trouble without end, than bear his cross with hu-
" mility. When they hear not a bishop concerning his own
" meaning, which he has so often explained in writing, to
" what purpose should he speak any more? There is no
" longer for him any edification to be given, or dignity to
" sustain, but by a profound silence. I know too well what
" scandal the church suffers by such disputes, to have any
" inclination to renew them from a regard to my own repu-
" tation. God will take care of the honour of his minister,
" if he deigns to make use of it for the benefit of the ministry
" in his diocese. I am even persuaded, that neutral and equi-
" table people are edified by my silence, and do not doubt
" of my honesty in the whole affair. No treatise would per-
" suade those who would not be persuaded. And you know
" very well, that there would be a double dealing, un-
" worthy of a Christian, in declining to write myself, and
" yet privately acting in concert with another who should
" write for me. Thus, I hope, you will neither be grieved nor
" surprized at the resolution I have taken, to have no share,
" either directly or indirectly, in a work of this nature."

Thus ended, never to be resumed, the affair of a book which found no longer any defender, because the author himself had sincerely given it up. A rare example! which shows us what the simplicity of obedience, and a compliance

without reserve, are capable of doing for the peace of the church.

The readiness and simplicity of this submission had surprised the king. They had prejudiced him, by representing the Archbishop of Cambray as a man of an uncomplying temper, who would never submit. On the contrary, he saw, that if his resolution had been unmoveable in the defence of his cause, it was followed with the submission of a child, as soon as the head of the church had spoke. The remembrance of all the virtues which had made an impression, recurred to his mind. And lastly, the inclination which the Duke of Burgundy still retained towards his Mentor, and which did not escape the courtiers' penetration, opened his eyes to discern what would be the event, and to foresee the confidence of his highness in the consequence. In this disposition of the court, means were not wanting to the Archbishop to have raised himself from his disgrace. It would have cost him no more than some step to show he desired it, and was willing to owe it to the persons who procured it for him. But his soul was in a situation, which resembled the happy tranquillity of mind, wherein his Telemachus represents Philocles in the isle of Samos, when he wanted an express declaration of heaven to draw him from the place of his banishment, and restore him to Idomeneus. In the portrait of the virtuous Cretan, his own character was very discernible, who had undesignedly described himself there, without being then able to foresee, that a disgrace would soon throw him into a condition of finishing the resemblance. His virtues, during his residence at court, had something of the austerity of Philocles, which indisposed the heart of Idomeneus towards him. What men, who do not well know themselves in perfection, are apt to look upon as the height of virtue, had been in the Archbishop of Cambray, the effect of a natural disposition, which from a too eager pursuit after what was perfect, had

contracted something of roughness and severity. It was this stiff part of virtue, which the hammer of adversity and humiliation was to mollify by an abatement. This change had been foretold to him, but it was not entirely effected till the latter end of his life. It was a strong and wonderful virtue, reduced to the simplicity of childhood, but a childhood divine, which, of a great man, had made him a man capable of being conversed with by all the world, and at the same time the most amiable. Virtues, learning, a fine taste, talents, and a general knowledge, were in him only for the use of others. His mind, dead to vanity, was in conversation entirely given up to that of another. The man of every profession, or the proficient in every branch of knowledge, was quite easy in his company. He directed every one first to the subject he best understood, and then he disappeared at once, seeming only to give an opportunity to others to produce out of their own stock the materials they were most able to furnish. By this means no body parted from him otherwise than well pleased with himself. He had always enjoyed in a great degree that eminent talent of making others set themselves off, and show their capacities; but this excellency was brought to perfection by the easy disposition of an heart disengaged from every thing in the world, and which the hand of God had bowed down by adversity to a state of pliableness and docility, which had not even subsisted in his earlier days. This lowness, which was the prevailing virtue of his old age, occasioned a stranger, who had passed through Cambray out of a desire to see him, to let fall this memorable expression, *I have formerly seen*, said he, upon taking his leave, *great men great, but I have now seen a great man little.* When he was advised to beware of the artifices of mankind, which he had so well known, and so oft experienced, he made answer, *Moriamur ia simplicitate nostrâ.* The love of this simplicity had extinguished in him every thing besides; all the great quali

ties he possessed, which would have been so apt to have puffed up another, were in his eyes no more than the unhappy reed, which had pierced the hand of him, who meant to have supported himself with it.

Jeune, j'etois trop sage,
Et voulois tout savoir.
Je n'ai plus en partage,
Que badinage;
Et touche en dernier age,
Sans rien prevoir.

The unhappy divisions, which in 1713, ended in the famous constitution of Pope Clement XI. and which itself was followed by so many disputes, had begun to break out in France towards the close of the year 1703. The duty of his office did not permit the Archbishop of Cambray to continue silent amidst these agitations, which so nearly concerned the doctrine of the church. Several volumes, which he published during the course of those ten years, are a treasure to the church, from the preciseness, clearness, and strength of reasoning, wherewith the catholic doctrine is there universally explained. We here again find, what was peculiar to him, so great a clearness of style in writing upon the most abstracted subjects, that his books may be read almost as currently as though they were merely historical.

The Cardinal de Noailles, in his turn, fell from the high favour, which after having placed him in the See of the capital, had likewise procured for him the cardinal's cap. The approbation he had given, whilst Bishop of Chalons, to the "Moral Reflections" of F. Quesnel, which it was intended to discountenance, became the occasion of the storm that was gathering against him. In the affair of the

Book of the Maxims, he had been drawn away by the Bishop of Meaux, who was now dead, and had joined with him against M. de Cambray. Notwithstanding this circumstance, those who interested themselves in the troubles which were coming upon the Cardinal, and foresaw the consequences of them, did not fail to cast their eyes upon M. de Fenelon. They knew very well, that he was a man whom the remembrance of past wrongs would have rather led to endeavour a return of good for evil, than to take an advantage of the present conjuncture. The Archbishop of Cambray found himself applied to in his exile by the Cardinal's friends, who sought to bring about a reconciliation between them. They judged that the return of such a man as he would be a matter of great consequence, as he would bring nothing with him but a sincere intention to make peace, and his capacity was sufficient to find out proper means to effect it. This was a tempting occasion to assume a character very grateful to self-love. But he replied, "I "own, a man who had any taste for business, would more "easily accept of the proposals you have so long pressed "me to comply with. But I have not so good an opinion "of myself, as to presume that I am able to restore the "peace to the Church, which you would have me attempt. "I have no inclination to take so much upon me, as you "would have me. It is the Cardinal de Noailles who must "restore peace to the Church. I am not in any secret; but "I dare venture to say, that he will restore it, whenever he "shall be disposed to succeed in it. It is already in his "hands. I heartily wish him the merit and the glory of it, "both in the sight of God and men. I should die content, "in seeing him at a distance bring this great work to an "happy conclusion."

Whilst the Archbishop of Cambray was employed in his diocese in discharging the office of his ministry, and enjoyed

there the peace of a mind which sets no value upon the world, the war, which France continued to maintain with great difficulties, drew near to the city where he resided. The neighbourhood of Cambray became the theatre of the last campaigns. In the midst of two immense armies, consisting of the greatest forces of almost all Europe, and the most illustrious commanders, he saw himself once more become a spectacle. The Court of Versailles resounded all the winter with the accounts given of him, at their return, by the general officers and courtiers who had been in the army. They all agreed to publish the order of his household, and the magnificence which kept it open to all comers; his profusions for the succour of the sick and wounded, with whom he filled all his apartments; the sanctuary which whole villages found at the same time within the inclosure of his palace, whither they fled for refuge from the desolated country; the care he took of the poorest of those wretched people, who were no less the objects of his concern, than the persons of distinction, which his house was always full of. Amidst all this incumbrance he found means to leave all his guests to their own liberty, and to allow himself time withal for the discharge of all his occupations, of what kind soever they were. Every one was admitted to interrupt him, without any hindrance to the carrying on of his business; so well he knew how to find time for every thing. To the charms of his conversation was joined a polite and easy manner, that rendered him agreeable to the world, and which he knew wonderfully well how to unite to the strict observance of all the decorums that were due to his station. He enchanted the hearts of all the soldiers. What I here advance is not the vain declamation of a man who studies to set off the subject he is describing; the court and city are full of eminent witnesses to the truth of what I here report. Nor am I under any apprehension, that they should

think what they then saw, admired and honoured, in any respect here exaggerated.

This veneration was not confined to the French army alone. The knowledge of his writings, and particularly of his Telemachus, had wrought so strong an impression in foreign countries, that the same sentiments were entertained of him in the army of the allies as in that of France. There was one day in the year, in which he usually visited a certain town in his diocese, to perform an office of devotion. This was known in the armies of the allies, and he could not go without passing very near their camp. Upon this they took such measures, that the detachments which were posted on the road might bring him to the camp, that they might have the satisfaction of seeing and hearing him. He had notice of it; but did not think that either his character as a subject of the king, with whom they were at war, or his state of banishment into his own diocese, which still subsisted, at least as to the order which had been given him, and which he had never taken pains to have revoked, would admit of his yielding to the design they had upon him. Whatever there was in this adventure to gratify his vanity, it had no effect upon him, and therefore he put off the journey he intended. If the generals of the allies were at any time informed, that any place which lay near their army belonged peculiarly to him, they immediately set guards upon it, and preserved the corn and wood with the same care as if it had been the property of the most considerable amongst themselves. And these places thus protected upon his account, became even places of refuge to the whole neighbourhood. At the close of the campaign in 1711, the army of the allies was in such a position as to lie within view of the ramparts of Cambray, and between the army of France and the little town of Cateau-Cambrensis, which is the principal domain of the Archbishop of Cambray. The place was filled with the Arch-

bishop's corn, and the stores which the country people had deposited there for shelter. The Duke of Marlborough immediately ordered them to be taken care of by a detachment which he sent thither for that purpose. But upon foreseeing that the scarcity of provisions for the subsistence of his army would not permit him to hold out in refusing to let his soldiers forage in that little village, he gave M. de Cambray notice of it. Accordingly the corn was put into waggons, and conveyed within sight of the camp of the allies, by an escort of their troops as far as the arsenal of Cambray, which was a kind of general quarters to the army of France, from its neighbouring post on that side of the town. This very singular circumstance shows to what a height the regard for him was carried.

This honour, which was paid to his virtue, was interrupted by a very great affliction. The Duke of Burgundy, who not a year ago was become Dauphin, and immediate heir to the throne, by the death of the Dauphin his father, died himself. In the height of his grief, the Archbishop was heard to intermingle these words with his sighs, "All my bonds are broken." These were lawful bonds indeed; but it is God's will that they should be broken in the souls which he will have devoted entirely to himself.

Certain childish amusements, joined to the trifling employments of time which a court presents to a young prince upon his first appearance in the world, had, for a while, obscured a little the precious seed which had been sown in the heart of his highness, and which ought to have brought forth fruit in abundance; but for a long time before his death, the great principles he had imbibed, and which had taken deep root during the course of his education, had entirely gotten the upper hand. The disgrace he suffered in the campaign he made in 1708, when France lost Lisle, gave

the finishing stroke to his perfection. He there learned by experience the truth of what they oft had told him, that greatness, instead of placing men above the censures of the world, rendered them far more liable to them than other men; that the greatest kings have but borrowed power; that their confidence is vain, when they imagine themselves strong from the multitude of troops they draw together; that the division of the commanding officers, an unlucky accident, a shadow, a nothing, shall spread a terror in those vast bodies, and be capable of giving a shock to the greatest states.

The letters written by the Archbishop upon the mistakes of that sad campaign, with the Prince's answers, whereof the originals are still subsisting in his own hand-writing, supply us with valuable testimonials concerning the object of their correspondence and confidence. In them we discern in the pupil a deep sense of religion joined with candour, goodness, and a fixed resolution to learn the most difficult truths. "I "will endeavour to make use of the advice you give me. "Pray to God that he will give me his grace so to do. De- "sire of God more and more that he will grant me the love "of him above all things, above myself, friends, enemies, "for him and in him. I listen to a great many speeches "that are made, and will still be made. I condemn myself, "where I find I am to blame, and I despise the rest; sin- "cerely pardoning all that wish me ill, or do ill to me, and "praying for them. These are my sentiments, my dear "Archbishop, and notwithstanding all my faults, an absolute "determination to give myself up to God. Pray to him "without ceasing, that he will be pleased to finish in me "what he has already begun, and destroy in me whatever "proceeds from original sin and myself. You know that "my friendship for you is always the same."

Ever since the misfortunes of this campaign he was be-

come a new man. He was continually employed in forming of plans, which might one day be of service, in providing remedies for whatever stood in need of amendment in the state, and give him before-hand a thorough knowledge of the evils, and their true remedies.

The elevation of his genius, and the integrity of his heart, began to make a strong impression upon the king's mind, and to gain him a very large share of his confidence. He every day acquired a greater weight in the council. Upon an occasion, where their sentiments were divided, some being guided by the express terms of a treaty, and others urging the advantages which would arise by not strictly adhering to it, he gave his opinion in one word, *There is a treaty*. The Duke of Burgundy spoke but that word, the rest was all included, and the king followed his advice.

Some days after his death, the king ordered the box to be brought him, which contained the prince's most private papers. Upon this Madam de Maintenon wrote the following letter to the Duke of Beauvilliers. "I would have sent you "whatever was found there of your's and the Archbishop's of "Cambray, but the king would burn it himself. I own to "you, I was greatly concerned at it, for nothing can ever be "wrote so beautiful and so good; and if the prince we la-"ment has had some faults, it has not been for want of free "advice, or from having been too much flattered. We "may say, that those who walk upright, are never con-"founded."

The letter was dated from St. Cyr, March 15, 1712. It subsists in the original, written by Madam de Maintenon's own hand.

This testimony of Madam de Maintenon is very express,

who wrote this fifteen years after she had warmly declared herself against the Archbishop of Cambray, and after having seen so long time pass, without any motion on his side to regain the old confidence she had formerly placed in him to the highest degree.

Some persons, who would be thought to be very knowing, have given out as of their own knowledge, that Madam de Maintenon finding great opposition to a declaration which she had much at heart, the affair was referred to the decision of three persons, whereof the Archbishop of Cambray was one, that he had presided in this little assembly, and had given the casting vote against the declaration; that he had even written a letter to Madam de Maintenon in strong terms, to dissuade her from this declaration, wherein he told her, that if she prevailed to gain a consent to it, notwithstanding the great dislike that there was of it, in all probability it would occasion a coldness of disposition towards herself; and that then having nothing more to do, she would lose a real credit for a vain representation; and, lastly, that she ought rather to love the glory of the person in debate, than her own private advantage, and that this motive of disinterestedness should induce her to lay aside her views. And that this was what begun to create in her a dislike to the maxims of pure love. However, the change was not made all at once; her confidence for some time continued to appear the same; but after a short space it lessened by imperceptible degrees, till at length, when the disputes raised against Madam de Guion were at the height, and made use of to the disservice of the Archbishop of Cambray, her heart was the more readily inclined to be prejudiced against him. But supposing that this anecdote was not a fiction, invented by such persons as pretend to dive farther than others into the mysteries of the court, it is at least certain, that those who were most conversant with the Archbishop of

Cambray, and had a very great share in his confidence, never heard any thing drop from him, which could give the least credit to the story. We even see by the letter we have given above, from Madam de Maintenon to the Duke of Beauvilliers, how capable she was of doing justice to those with whom she had not the least intercourse, by reason of the part she had acted against them.

In the mean while, what the Archbishop had so little sought after was brought about happily of itself. Lewis XIV. had for some time past been entirely reconciled to him in opinion. A few months before the peace at Utrecht, the bishopric of Ypres was vacant. This preferment he gave to the Abbé de Lavel, who resided with the Archbishop of Cambray, in his palace as his friend, and whom he had drawn nearer to himself, by making him vicar-general of his diocese. Thus by little and little the disgrace wore off. His majesty afterwards attempting to put an end to the great affair which disturbed the church within his dominions, and which this great prince had not the satisfaction to see brought to a conclusion before his death, had thoughts of recalling the Archbishop, in order to employ him in this great work. What had not been done in the life-time of the Duke of Burgundy, whose death had been preceded and followed by the decease of the Archbishop's two intimate friends, the Dukes of Chereuse and Beauvilliers, was insensibly brought about by the necessity of affairs alone, at a time when the Bishop of Cambray had lost all that might have been a support to him at court. He saw things disposing themselves to this return with very different views from what mankind usually have upon such occasions. He thought of nothing but retirement. If they had obliged him to come to court, he would have gone thither only to give his thoughts upon the proper methods of restoring a solid peace to the church of France, and then

have retired as soon as he had brought about a re-union. This re-union was all that he had in view. At the same time his scheme of retiring made him even think of setting himself entirely at liberty, by giving up his archbishopric; and he had taken his measures accordingly. After the most exact enquiries into the merits of different subjects, to fix upon one whom he might desire of the king, that his majesty would be pleased to appoint for his successor, he was almost determined upon the Abbé de Javanes, who is at present Bishop of Chalons sur Marne. This was a young clergyman who did not appear in the great world till after the Archbishop of Cambray had left it, never more to come out of his diocese. He had not the least affinity with him, either by parentage, or any other relation. He was not even personally acquainted with him, but was absolutely determined by the testimonies which those whom he had consulted had given of him, and who, being upon the spot, were best able to judge of the subjects that were most promising. But all this was so privately carried on, that in all probability the person whom it most concerned may at this very time be ignorant of it.

These were the dispositions of the Archbishop of Cambray, when an acute disease, which lasted but a few days, carried him out of the world on the 7th of January, 1715, in the sixty-fourth year of his age. The evening he died, he wrote the following letter to F. le Tellier, his majesty's confessor.

"I have just received the extreme unction. It is in this "state, my reverend father, wherein I prepare myself to "appear in the presence of God, that I beg of you instantly "to lay my real sentiments before the king. I ever was dis-"posed to submit to the church, and have always held in "abhorrence the novelties which have been imputed to me.

"I received the condemnation of my book with the most "absolute simplicity. There never was a single moment in "my life, wherein I did not bear the warmest acknowledg- "ments of gratitude towards the king, the sincerest zeal, the "most profound respect, and most inviolable attachment to "his person.

"I take the liberty of asking two favors of his majesty, "which do not regard either myself, or any of mine. The one is, "that his majesty would have the goodness to appoint me "a successor, that is pious, regular, good, and zealous "against Jansenism, which has gained ground in these quar- "ters. The other is, that he will be pleased to accomplish "with my successor, what could not be done with me, for "Mess. de S. Sulpice. I am indebted to his majesty for the "succour I received from them; nothing can be seen more "apostolical and more venerable. If his majesty will be "pleased to signify to my successor, that he would do well "to conclude with these gentlemen what is already so far "advanced, the affair will soon be finished. I heartily wish "his majesty a long life, which the church, no less than the "state, has infinite need of. If I am admitted into the pre- "sence of God, I will frequently beg of him the same fa- "vours."

The king who had designed to employ the Archbishop of Cambray in the affair we have mentioned, seemed very much afflicted with his loss. When the news of it was brought to him, he answered very sorrowfully, *He is wanting to us at a time we have need of him.* His death was lamented at Cambray, like that of a parent. Such of his contemporaries, as are now left in the country, cannot see any person who recalls him to their mind without tears. Several of those who had confided wholly in him during his life-time, for the direction of their consciences, took pains after his

death, to communicate the letters they had received from him upon different ocasions, and which they had preserved as a treasure of great value. They were formed into one collection, which makes up several volumes, and has been printed under the title of *Spiritual Compositions*. In this collection were comprehended divers pious discourses, which the Archbishop had seen published in his life-time under different titles. Those persons into whose hands the manuscripts had fallen, did not print them without taking the liberty to alter them, under a pretence of making such corrections, as their want of judgment in matters of this nature had led them to think necessary. In the edition of *Spiritual Compositions* they were collated with exact copies, that were again at this time found, and restored to their former integrity. There are however, some fragments, though very few, wherein those copies were defective. But the passages, wherein these alterations have been made, are easy to be discerned from the perplexed intermixture of phrases and thoughts, whereby the genuine text, which is plainly to be distinguished by the style, is seen only by intervals. The different editions which have been already sent abroad of these *Spiritual Compositions*, were all of them very greedily bought up by the public. There are found among them letters and discourses written at all times of the life of this illustrious prelate, both before, and after the affair of his book of *The Maxims of the Saints*, and all with the same spirit. It is in one of the volumes of this collection, that the letters written to the Duke of Burgundy during his unfortunate campaign in 1708, have been inserted; what concerned private persons only being left out.

The same spirit which the Archbishop had retained to the close of his life, without attempting to raise himself from his disgrace in France, had likewise rendered him undesirous of the dignity, which is the great object of the ambition of pre-

lates. All that had passed in the affair of his book, the constant tenor of his conduct in it, and the simplicity of his submission after the judgment, had made a strong impression upon the mind of Innocent XII. This Pope died without declaring two Cardinals, which he had nominated *in petto*. Letters from Rome, containing a particular account of the circumstances of it, and from the best hands, showed in time, that the Archbishop of Cambray was one of them. They said that the holy father, being upon his death bed, would have declared him, but he was dissuaded from it by those who represented to him the danger of thereby disobliging the court of France, which had laid the condemnation of the Archbishop's book so much at heart. They had urged, that this might make a difference between the two courts, and even be prejudicial to the Archbishop, as it would still more exasperate his own court, to see him nominated to the cardinalship, at a time when he was looked upon there to be in disgrace. The Pope yielded to these representations, and died without declaring either of the two whom he had reserved *in petto*.

Cardinal Albini, who succeeded him under the name of Clement XI. was doubtless not ignorant of what his predecessor had designed. Besides, this Cardinal had been always one of those who were most inclined to favour the Archbishop in the affair of his book, and he continued constantly to have a singular regard for him. Any other besides the Archbishop of Cambray would have thence found means not to have been forgotten in the promotions that were made; but then he must have departed from the principles which he followed during his whole life. F. d'Aubenton had spent at Rome the interval, which passed between his departure from the court of Spain, and the time of his being recalled to supply the place of confessor to King Philip V. a second time. The Archbishop of Cambray kept up a regular correspondence with him upon the subject of religion, and he

communicated what the Archbishop wrote to the Pope. This was a very favourable channel, to make himself be thought of to his own advantage. F. d'Aubenton was still at Rome in 1715, when the news was brought thither of the Archbishop's death. Clement XI. under the affliction he was in for it, reproached the Jesuit for not having ever recommended the Archbishop of Cambray to be made a cardinal. This F. d'Aubenton sent word of to one of his friends at Paris, who is still living. Thus we may say, that the most absolute declension from any endeavour to procure any sort of temporal advantage to himself, was the constant and real quietism of this great man.

PART OF THE

SPIRITUAL WORKS

OF THE CELEBRATED

FRANCIS FENELON.

CHAP. I.

That God is at present little known.

WHAT men are most destitute of is the knowledge of God. They know indeed from books a certain series of miracles, and from facts recorded in history many tokens of his providence; they have perhaps made serious reflections on the corruption and vanity of the world, and are also convinced of the truth of many useful maxims, conducive to the reformation of their manners, with respect to their salvation. But all this building wants a foundation, this body of piety is without a soul. That which ought to animate the

truly faithful person, is the idea of that God, who is all, who does all, and to whom all is due. He is infinite in all, in wisdom, power and love. We must not therefore be surprised, if all that comes from him, retains the character of infinite, and surpasses human reason. In all his proceedings, his thoughts and ways, says the Scripture,* are as much above our thoughts and ways, as the heavens are higher than the earth. When he would execute that which he has resolved upon, his power does not exert itself by any laborious efforts; for there is not any design, however difficult, which is not as easy for him to accomplish, as the most common matters; it was as easy for him to create the heavens and the earth, such as we now see them, as to cause a river to run in its natural channel, or to let a stone fall from an height. His power lies wholly in his will; he need but will and the thing is done. If the Scripture represents him speaking at the creation, it is not that it was necessary a word should go out from him, to make known his will, to that nature he willed to produce. That word which the Scripture represents to us is altogether simple and internal; it is the thought which he had to make the things, and the determination of producing them, which he formed in himself. That thought was fruitful, and without going out from him, it drew from him as from the source of all beings, all those which compose the

* Isaiah lv. v. 9.

universe. His mercy is nothing else but his pure will. He loved us before the creation of the world, he has seen us, known us, prepared his blessings for us, loved and chosen us from all eternity. When any new good befals us, it flows from that ancient source; God never has a new will, he is immutable, it is we that change. When we are just and good, we are conformable and agreeable to him; when we forsake what is right, this conformity ceases, and he can no longer regard us with pleasure; this is an unchangeable rule, which we his creatures, liable to change, approach to, and deviate from successively. His justice against the wicked, and his love for the good are the same thing; the same goodness which unites with all that is good, is incompatible with all that is wicked. As to mercy, it is the loving kindness of God, that finding us evil, would render us good. That mercy which makes itself sensible to us in time, is in its source, an eternal love of God for his creatures. He alone gives true goodness. Woe to that presumptuous soul that hopes to find it in itself. It is the love which God has for us, that gives us all; but the greatest gift he can bestow on us, is to give us the love we ought to have for him. When God loves us, so as to make us love him, he reigns in us; he then constitutes our life, our peace, our happiness, and we begin already to live a blessed life in him. That love which he has for us, bears the stamp of infinity, he does not love like us, with a limited and circumscribed love; when

he loves, all the fruits of his love are infinite. He descends from heaven to earth, to seek us his creatures whom he loves. He takes our nature on him, and clothes us with his own. It is by such prodigies of love, that the Infinite surpasses all the affections which men are capable of. He loves as God, and this love has every thing incomprehensible in it, so that it is the height of folly to endeavour to measure infinite love by a finite wisdom. Far from losing any of his greatness in these excesses of his love, he thereon engraves the stamp of his immensity, by marking in them the sallies and transports of an infinite love. Oh! how great and lovely is he in his mysteries, but we have not eyes to see them, and we want such sentiments, as would enable us to perceive God in all things.

CHAP. II.

The necessity of knowing and loving God.

WE must not be surprised that men do so little for God, and that the little they do costs them so much; they do not know him, they scarcely believe that he exists, their faith in him is rather a blind deference to the authority of common opinion, than a living and clear conviction of the Deity. They suppose it, because they dare not examine it, and because their stupid indifference and their distraction, occasioned by their passions, which draw them towards other objects, will not suffer them to

search into it: so that they know not God, but in a wonderfully obscure manner, and as a God afar off; they regard him as a severe and powerful being, who requires much of us, who thwarts our inclinations, who threatens us with great evils, and against whose judgments we ought to provide. Thus it is, that those think who make serious reflections on religion, and they are but few. We say there is a person who fears God, and in effect he only fears without loving him, as children fear the master that corrects them, and as a bad servant fears the lash of him he serves through fear alone, without having any regard to his interest. Would they be treated by a son or even a servant, as they treat God? it is because they know him not, for if they knew him they must love him. "God is love," as says St. John, he who loves him not, does not know him, for how is it possible that we should know the love he has for us, without loving him again?

But who is it, O my God, that can know thee? he only who can know nothing but thee, who no longer knows himself, and to whom all that is not thee, shall be as if it was not. The world may be surprised at such language, because the world is full of itself, of vanity and lies, and void of God: but I trust, that there will always be found in it, souls that thirst after God, and who can taste the truths that I am about to declare.

O my God, before thou madest the heavens and the earth, there was only thee ; thou wast, for thou never didst begin to be, but thou wast alone. Besides thee, there was no other; thou didst enjoy thyself in that blessed solitude, thou wast all sufficient, and hadst none occasion to find any thing out of thyself, since it is thee, who far from receiving, bestowest on every being, by thy almighty word, all that they have; that is to say, by thy mere pleasure to which all things are easy, and which effects all that it desires by its mere will, without succession of times or labour. Thou didst cause that this world that was not, should begin to be. Thou didst not, as the artists of this world, who having the materials of their work, only join them together, and whose art consists in ranging by degrees, with a great deal of pains, those materials which they did not make. Thou foundest nothing made, and thou thyself madest all the materials of thy work. It was on the void that thou wroughtest; thou saidest, let the world be, and it was; thou hadst only to speak and it was done.

But why didst thou make all these things? they were all made for man, and man was made for thee. This is the order which thou hast established; woe to the soul that overturns it, who would that all was made for him, and makes himself the centre of all; this is breaking the fundamental law of the creation. —No, my God, thou canst not give up thy essential right as Creator, that would be to degrade

thyself: thou canst pardon the guilty soul that has offended thee, but thou canst not cease to be against the soul that assumes to itself all thy gifts, and refuses to return itself by a sincere and disinterested love to thee its Creator. Only to fear thee, is so far from giving itself up to thee, that it is only thinking of thee with regard to self; to love thee only with regard to the advantages which it finds in thee, is to bring thee to self, instead of raising self to thee. What then ought to be done, to give up ourselves entirely to thee, our Creator? We ought to renounce ourselves, lose ourselves, enter into thy interests, O my God, even against our own; in a word, we must love thee without loving ourselves.

Alas, how many souls go out of this world loaded with virtues and good works, yet wanting that purity without which they cannot see God, (who ought to be found in that pure and total surrender of the creature to the Creator,) will have occasion for some further purification, by that jealous fire, which will consume all that in the soul, that attaches it to itself: these souls enter not into God, till after they are fully come out of themselves. In that trial of inexorable justice, what still remains to self, must be consumed. Alas, how many souls take shelter in their virtues, and will not hear of a perfect self-renunciation? It is an hard saying and gives them offence, but their neglect will cost them dear, and they will pay an hundred fold for their self-seeking,

and those vain consolations from which they had not courage to depart.

But to return. Such then is the greatness of God, that he can do nothing but for himself and his own glory, that incommunicable glory, of which he is necessarily jealous, and which he cannot give to another as he says himself:* on the contrary, such is the baseness of the creature, and its dependance, that it cannot, without usurping a false divinity, and without violating an immutable law of the creation, do any thing, say any thing, think or will any thing for itself and its own glory.

O thou nothing, thou wouldst give glory to thyself, yet thou existest only on condition, never to be any thing in thine own eyes; thou breathest only for him, from whom thou didst receive thy being. He owes all to himself, and thou owest all to him; he can make no concessions; all that he leaves to thee, must proceed from the inviolable law of his wisdom and goodness. One single moment, a single sigh devoted to thine own interest, essentially wounds the end of the Creator in the creation. He wants nothing, but desires all, because all is due to him, and all is not too much for him, so great is he; but even that greatness is the cause that he can produce nothing out of himself, that is not all for him; it is the desire to please him, that he wishes to find in his creature; he has

* Isaiah xlii. 8.

made for me the heaven and the earth, but he cannot suffer that I should voluntarily and by choice, take a single step for any other end, than to accomplish his will. Before he produced his creatures, he had in him no other will but his own; can we suppose that he created reasonable creatures to will otherwise than he wills?—no: it is the sovereign reason that must enlighten them, and be their reason; it is his will, the rule of all good, that must will in us: all our wills must be one with his, and therefore we say to him, "thy kingdom come, thy will be done."

The better to comprehend all this, we must consider that God, who made us out of nothing, remakes us again, as I may say, at every instant. It is by no means necessary, that we are the same today, which we were yesterday; we might cease to be, and effectually fall back into that nothingness out of which he has drawn us, if that same almighty hand that brought us forth, did not prevent our falling again into it. We are nothing by ourselves, we are only what God made us to be, and only for such time as he pleases; he need only withdraw his hand, which supports us, to plunge us into the abyss of our own nothingness, as a stone which we hold in the air, falls by its own weight, when we no longer hold it. We have not, therefore, being or life, but through the gift of God.

Again, there are other blessings of a still more

pure and elevated kind; a good life is worth more than the life itself; virtue is of a greater price than health; rectitude of heart and the love of God, are as much above any temporal gifts, as the heavens are above the earth. If therefore without his help, we cannot for one moment possess those favours so vile and gross, how much more certainly, must he give us those sublime gifts of his love, a detachment from ourselves and even from all the virtues?

O my God, not to know thee then, is to regard thee as out of us, as an Almighty Being that gives laws to all nature, and has made all things visible; this is but to know one part of that which thou art, and to be ignorant of that which is most wonderful, and most concerns thy reasonable creatures. That which elevates my soul and inspires me with hope is, that thou art the God of my heart, there thou dost all that pleaseth thee. When I am good, it is thou that makest me so, thou not only turnest my heart as thou pleasest, but givest me one according to thine own; it is thou that lovest thyself in me, it is thou that animatest my soul, as my soul animates my body, thou art more present and intimate to me, than I am to myself, this self, for which I have so much sensibility, and which I love so much, ought to be a stranger in comparison of thee, it is thou that gavest it to me, without thee it would be nothing, therefore thou requirest that I should love thee more than it.

O incomprehensible power of my God! O extensive right of the Creator over his creatures, which the creature can never sufficiently comprehend! O prodigy of love, which God alone can effect! God puts himself, as I may say, between me and myself, to separate me from myself; he would be nearer to me by his pure love, than I am to myself; he would that I should look upon this self, as a strange being; he would that I should escape out of the territories of this self, that I should sacrifice it to him without return, and that I should offer it up totally, and without any conditions, to him, from whom I hold it; what I am, ought to be less dear to me, than him by whom I am. He made me not for myself, but for himself; that is to say, to love him, to will that which he wills, and not to love myself in following my own will. If any one finds his heart revolt against this entire sacrifice of self, to him who has created us, I bewail his blindness, I lament to see him so a slave to himself, and I pray God to deliver him from it, by teaching him to love without self interest.

O my God, I see in those people, who are offended at this doctrine of pure love, the darkness and rebellion caused by original sin. Thou didst not create the heart of man with this bias to a property so shocking: That rectitude, in which the Scripture teaches us that thou didst create him, consists in not living to self, but to him who made us for himself. O Father, O Father, thy children

have disfigured themselves, and resemble thee no more; they are quite angry and discouraged, when they are desired to be to thee, as thou art to thyself. In reversing this just order, they would erect themselves into divinities, they would live to themselves, do all for themselves, or at least give nothing but with reserve, on certain conditions, and for their own interests. O monstrous property! O the unknown rights of God! O the insolence and ingratitude of the creatures! miserable nothingness, what have you to take care of for yourself? what have you that belongs to you? what have you that comes not from above, and which ought not to return thither? All (even this unjust self that would divide with God his gifts) is a gift of God, made only for himself; all that is within you, cries against you for the Creator. Be silent then, O creature, strip thyself of all that thou hast, and give thyself entirely to thy Creator.

What a comfort it is, O my God, to think that every thing is the work of thy hand, all within and all without me! thon art always with me. When I do evil thou art with me, reproaching me for the evil I do, making me regret the good I have omitted, and shewing me a mercy which stretcheth forth its arms to receive me. When I do good, it is thou inspirest me with the desire to it, and effects it in me; it is thou that inclinest my heart to love the good, and detest the evil; it is

thou that sufferest, that edifiest my neighbour, that givest alms. I do all these things, but it is through thee who causest me to do them. These good works, which are thy gifts, become thy works; but they are always thy gifts, and cease to be good works, when I regard them as my own, and when their being thy gift, (which alone makes them valuable,) escapes my sight.

Thou art then (transporting thought) working incessantly in my heart, there thou workest invisibly, as the miner works in the bowels of the earth. Thou doest every thing, and the world sees thee not, it attributes nothing to thee; I myself have wandered in looking for thee, by vain efforts at a distance from me. I have collected in my mind all the wonders of nature, to frame an idea of thy greatness; I sought thee among thy creatures, and thought not of finding thee in my own heart, where thou art never absent. No, my God, we need not, to discover thee, descend into the earth, nor go over the sea, nor ascend into heaven,* as say thy holy oracles; for thou art nearer to us than we are to ourselves.

O God, who art so great, and at the same time so familiar, so raised above the heavens, and yet so condescending to the lowest state of thy creature; so immense, and yet so intimately inclosed

* Deut. xxx. 12. Rom. x. 6.

in the recesses of my heart; so terrible, and yet so amiable; so jealous, and yet so easy of access, to those who freely approach thee with pure love; when shall thy children cease to be ignorant of thee;—who can give me a voice strong enough to reproach the whole world with its blindness, and to tell it with authority all that thou art? When men are desired to search for thee in their own hearts, it is as if they were directed to go to a distant and unknown land in quest of thee: for what is there more unknown to the generality of vain and dissipated men, than the bottom of their own hearts? do they know what it is ever to look into themselves? have they ever sought the road? can they even imagine what is that interior sanctuary, that impenetrable center of the soul, where thou wouldst be adored in spirit and in truth? They are always out of themselves, engrossed by the objects of their ambition or their amusements. Alas, "how can they understand heavenly things, when,"* as Jesus Christ said, "they understand not earthly things." They cannot conceive what it is to enter into themselves by serious reflections; what would they then say, if one was to propose to them to come out of themselves, and lose themselves in God?

As for me, O my Creator, with eyes shut to all outward objects which are but "vanity and vexation of spirit,"† I would find in the most secret recesses of my heart, an intimate familiarity with

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* John iii. 12. † Eccl. i. 14.

thee, through Jesus Christ thy Son, who is thy wisdom and eternal righteousness; who became a child, that by his infancy and the foolishness of his cross, he might humble our vain and false wisdom; there in the bottom of my own heart I would, let it cost me ever so dear, in spite of all my forecast and reflections, become little, foolish, and more despicable in my own eyes, than in the eyes of all the false sages of the world; there I would willingly be inebriated by thy Holy Spirit, as were the apotles, content to be also with them, the scorn of the world.

But who am I, that I should think of such things? It is no longer me, sinful earthly creature, but thou, O Jesus, that thinkest those things in me, and wilt accomplish them, that the triumph of thy grace in such an unworthy instrument may be the greater.

O God, we know thee not, we know not who thou art! "the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not:"* It is by thee we live, we think and enjoy all pleasures; and yet we forget thee, by whom we do all these things; we see nothing but by thy universal light, O illuminator of souls, which shineth far brighter than the sun of this world, yet seeing nothing but by thee, we see thee not; it is thou that givest all things; to stars their light, to fountains their water and

* John i. 5.

course, to the earth its plenty, to fruits their relish, to flowers their beauty and their scent, to all nature its riches and its charms, to men, health, reason and virtue; thou givest all, doest all, and regulatest all; I see nothing but thee, all the rest, like a shadow, disappears in the eyes of him who has once beheld thee; and yet the world sees thee not; but alas, he who has not seen thee, has never seen any thing; he has passed his life in the illusion of a dream, he is as if he was not, nay more unhappy, for it were better for him, (as I learn from thy word,) that he had never been born.

For me, my God, every thing within me discovers thee to me; all the good I do is thy performance, I have a thousand times been sensible, that of myself, I can neither conquer my tempers, destroy my habits, moderate my pride, follow the dictates of my reason, nor continue to will the good which I once willed. That very will is thy gift, and thou alone canst preserve it pure; without thee, I am but as a reed shaken with the smallest wind; thou hast bestowed on me courage, uprightness, and every good thought I have; thou hast given me a new heart, which desires thy righteousness, and is converted by thy eternal truth; in giving it to me, thou hast likewise taken away the earthly corrupt heart of the old man, which is jealous, vain, ambitious, restless, unjust, and eager after pleasures. To what misery have I been devoted, could I ever have believed

and hoped thus to have turned to thee, and shaken off the yoke of my tyrannic passions!

But here is the great wonder, which effaces all the rest; what other hand but thine could tear me from myself? It is not I that have done this work, for self can never come out of self, there must then be a foreign support on which I may rest, when banished from myself, to condem the misery of my own heart. This help must be foreign, since I cannot find it in myself, which is what it ought to fight with; but it must also be within me, to tear this self from the most inward folds of my heart. It is thou, my God, who by causing thy light to penetrate, even to the bottom of my soul, which nothing else could reach, hast shewn me my own deformity, I well know that in seeing it, I have not changed it, and that I am still deformed in thy eyes; I well know that what belongs to me could not discover it, but I see it in part, and wish to discover the whole; I seem horrible to myself, but the hope which I have in thee quiets my mind, for I would neither flatter my vices, nor suffer them to discourage me; I see it then and bear it, without letting this shame disquiet me. O my God, I am for thee against myself; thou alone couldst thus cause me to be at strife with myself; this is thy internal operation, which thou continuest daily, to tear from me all that remains of evil, and the old Adam, and to complete the formation of the new man; this is that second creation of the new man, which is day by day renewed.

O my God, I leave myself in thy hands, do what thou pleasest with this clay, give it a form, break it afterwards, it is thine, and has nothing to object, content if it serves to accomplish thy designs, and that nothing in me resists thy good pleasure, for which I was created. Require, command, forbid, as it shall please thee, whatever thou wouldst have me do, or not do, exalted or abased, comforted or suffering, diligent in thy works or unprofitable in all things, I will always equally adore thee, by sacrificing all self-will to thine; my part in all things is only to say with Mary,* "be it unto me according to thy word."

But while by thee, all is thus effected inwardly, thou art not less active outwardly. I discover in all, even in the smallest atom, that great hand which supports the heaven and the earth, and to which the direction of the universe seems but as a sport. The only thing which embarrasses me, is to comprehend why thou sufferest so much evil to be mixed with the good; thou canst not be the author of evil, all thou doest is good; whence comes it then, that the whole world is filled with guilt and misery? nay, it seems as if the evil prevailed over the good; thou hast made the world only for thy glory, and yet we are tempted to believe it turns to thy dishonour; the number of the wicked infinitely surpasses that of the good, even within thy church; almost all flesh have corrupted their ways;

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* Luke i. 38.

the good are only so in part, and we have almost equal reason to lament over them as the bad; all suffer, and all are in a state of disorder; our misery equals our corruption. Why delayest thou, O Lord, to separate the evil from the good? Haste, O Lord, to glorify thy name, and teach those who blaspheme it, how great it is. Why dost thou not call all things to order? methinks I hear the wicked say, "the Lord seeth us not, the Lord hath forsaken the earth."* Arise, O Lord, arise, and tread thine enemies under thy feet!

But, O my God, thy judgments are far above, out of our sight, "thy ways are more above our ways, than the heavens are above the earth,† we are impatient because our whole life is but as a moment; on the contrary, thy forbearance is owing to thy eternity, in respect to which "a thousand years are but as one day.‡ "All times and seasons are in thy power,"§ and men are ignorant of them; they are therefore offended and impatient, and they regard thee as sunk under the weight of so much iniquity; but thou laughest at their blindness and erroneous zeal.

Thou hast given me understanding to perceive that there are two kinds of evil; the one, is the violation of thy law, which proceeds from men acting without thee, and abusing their liberty;

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* Ezek. viii. 12 † Isaiah lv. 9. ‡ 2 Peter iii. 8. § Acts i. 7.

the other* is caused by thee, and is in fact a blessing, when considered as that punishment and correction which thou hast destined for the wicked. Sin is the evil which proceeds from man; death, diseases, shame, pain and all other miseries, are the evils which by thy providence are converted into good, making them serve to the reparation of sin. As to sin, it is suffered by thee, that, as the Scripture expresses it,† man may remain free "in the band of his counsel." But without being the author of sin, how miraculously dost thou make even it subservient to thy glory? thou sometimes makest use of the wicked to correct and perfect the good, by humbling them; at other times thou makest use of them against themselves, and punishest them by each other; but that which is most affecting and amiable is, that thou causest the injustice and persecution of some, to convert others. How many people are there, who living in the contempt of thy law and forgetfulness of thy favours, thou hast brought back to thyself, in detaching them from the world, by the injuries they have suffered in it?

But, O my God, I perceive another wonder, which is, that thou sufferest a mixture of good and evil, even in those hearts that are devoted to thee; the imperfections which remain in such pious souls, serve to humble them, and detach them from them-

* Amos iii. 6. † Eccl. xv. 14.

selves, to make them sensible of their own weakness, to make them apply eagerly to thee for succour, and to make them comprehend that prayer is the source of all true virtue. O what abundance of good dost thou draw from the evil thou permittest! thou sufferest the evil, to educe from thence the highest good, and to make thy almighty love shine forth, by the art with which thou makest use of those evils. Thou dost not cause the injustice of man, but though incapable of producing it, thou employest it so as to make it the instrument of thy justice and mercy.

Human reason that would enter into judgment with the Almighty, and penetrate into the internal secrets of Providence, replies, God had no occasion to draw the good out of evil, he need only at once not have permitted the evil, by making all men good; it was in his power, and he need only have done for all men what he has done for some, whom he has raised out of themselves by the charms of his grace:—why has he not done this?

O my God, I know by thy holy word that "thou "hatest nothing that thou hast made; thou wouldst "not that any should perish; thou art the saviour "of all men;"* but more so of some than of others. When thou shalt judge the earth, thou shalt be victorious in thy judgments: the condemned crea-

* Wisd. xi. 25. 2 Pet. iii. 9. 1 Tim. iv. 10.

ture shall see the justice of his sentence; thou shalt shew him clearly that thou hast done all that was possible for the culture of thy vine; it is not thou that hast failed, but it that has undone itself. At present man sees not this, because he knows not his own heart, nor discerns the grace which has been offered to him, nor his own inward resistance. At the day of judgment all will be unfolded to his sight, he will see what thou hast done for him, and what he has done against himself; he will be horribly afraid to see it, yet will not be able to avoid viewing it in everlasting despair.

This is what man understands not in this life, but from the time that he knows thee, he ought to believe this truth without comprehending it; he cannot doubt of thy existence; thou, by whom all things were made; nor can he doubt but thou art the sovereign good; therefore he may conclude, in spite of all the darkness that surrounds him, that being gracious to some, thou art just to all; and still further, that thou dost bestow grace on those who shall eternally feel thy justice. It is true thou art not equally bountiful to all, but yet on all thou dost bestow grace, and such grace as will render them inexcusable when thou shalt judge them, or rather when they shall judge themselves, and that the truth engraven on their hearts shall pronoucne their condemnation. If they have been wicked, it is not that they wanted ability from thee to be good, but they willed it not, and

thou didst not deprive them of their liberty. Who can complain that he did not receive from thee superabundance of grace? the master who gives to all his servants the just recompence of their work, has he not a right to be peculiarly liberal to some; what he gives to those above their wages, does it give the others the smallest foundation of complaint? By this, O Lord, thou shewest,* as says the Scripture, that all thy ways are verity and judgment; thou art good towards us all, but good in different degrees, and the mercies which thou scatterest with such an extraordinary profusion on some, are no rule for thy acting always in the same manner.

Be silent then, O rebellious and ungrateful creatures; you who this instant reflect on the gifts of God, remember that the very power of reflecting is his gift: when you would murmur at the deprivation of his graces, it is his grace that renders you attentive to the consideration of his favours. Far from murmuring at the author of all blessings, hasten to profit by those he this instant bestows on you, open your heart, humble your weak judgment, and sacrifice your vain presumptuous reason: O thou vessel of clay, he who formed thee, has a right to break thee: yet far from doing so, lest he should be obliged to it, he threatens thee out of mercy.

* Psalm xxv. 9. lxxxix. 15.

I would then, O my God, for ever stifle all such reasonings as tempt me to doubt of thy goodness. I know that thou canst never be but good: I know also that thou hast made thy work like unto thyself, holy, just, and good: but thou hast not deprived man of the liberty of chusing good or evil: thou dost offer him the good; this is sufficient, and I am sure of this, without knowing exactly the manner: but the immutable idea which I have of thee, does not suffer me to doubt it; there can be no reason, sufficiently strong, to make me suppose a defect in thee with regard to any man, whose interior I know not, and is perhaps unknown to himself; for I have abundant reason to convince me, that thou wilt never condemn any man without rendering him inexcuseable in his own eyes: this is enough to quiet my mind, and convince me that if I perish, I shall owe my destruction to mysslf, by resisting, like the Jews, that holy Spirit, which is the internal grace.

O Father of mercy, I will no longer philosophize on thy grace, but silently abandon myself to it: It does all in man, it is by it that I act and that I forbear, that I suffer, that I believe, that I hope and that I love: if I obey its influences it will be all in me; by it I shall effect all; it is it that moves the heart, but in the end the heart must be moved, and thou dost not save man without its co-operation. Therefore it is my business to work without delay, that I may not check that grace which im-

pels me; all the good I have proceeds from it, all the evil from myself; when I do good, it is it that animates me: when I do evil, it is because I resist it. God would not that I should know more than this, every thing else would only serve to nourish in me a vain curiosity. O my God, grant that I may always be in the number of those babes to whom thou revealest these mysteries, that are hidden from the wise and prudent of the world.

Now, O great God, I no longer hesitate at this difficulty, that has so often perplexed my mind: Whence comes it that God, so good, has created so many men that he suffers to be lost? whence comes it that his own Son was born and died, yet that his birth and death should be profitable to so few? I now understand, O Almighty Being, that all thou dost costs thee nothing; the things that we wonder at, and which surprise us most, are as easy and familiar to thee, as those things we regard with less astonishment on account of their being common. Thou dost not need to proportion the fruit of thy labour to the difficulty of thy work: for no work costs thee either effort or labour; and the only fruit thou canst reap from all thy works, is the accomplishment of thy good pleasure. Thou dost not want any thing, and there is nothing thou canst gain; thou art possessed of all things in thyself; what thou dost outwardly is neither necessary for thy happiness or thy glory: thy glory therefore would not be less, should any man

fail to receive the fruit of the death of the Saviour. Thou mightest have caused him to be born for a single being, whom thou hadst predestinated; one alone would suffice, if thou hadst willed but one; for thou dost all that thou dost, not through any want thou hast of the things, or for their merit with respect to thee, but solely to accomplish thy all-gracious will, which has no other rule but itself, and thy good pleasure. Moreover, if so many men perish, though washed in the blood of thy Son, it is, as I said before, because thou dost leave them in the use of their liberty; thou dost find thy glory in them by thy justice, as thou dost find it in good men by thy mercy; thou dost punish the wicked only because they are wicked, in spite of thee, though they had wherewithal to make them good; and thou dost crown the good, only because they are become so by thy grace; thus I see in thee all is justice and goodness.

I have already remarked, O Eternal Wisdom, why so many outward evils are suffered by thee, thy providence draws out of them the greatest good. Weak and ignorant men are offended at them; they lament as if thy cause was abandoned; few fail to imagine that wickedness triumphs over thee; they are tempted to think that thou seest not what passes, or art insensible of it. But let these blind and impatient men wait but a little, the wicked that triumph now, shall not do so long;

" for they shall soon be cut down like the grass; " and be withered even as the green herb:"* death will bring back all to order. Nothing provokes thee to hasten the destruction of thine enemies; thou are patient, as St. Austin says, because thou art eternal; thou knowest the blow is coming that will dash them to pieces; thou holdest thine arm a long time suspended, because thou knowest the weight of it, and that thou art our Father, who at the last strikes not but with regret and out of necessity. Let impatient men then be offended, but as for me, I regard ages but as a minute, because I know ages are less than a minute before thee. That succession of time, which we call the duration of the world, is but a scene that disappears, a figure that passes away and vanishes. A little while, O man, who as yet sees nothing, a little while, and you shall see what God is preparing; you shall see him with all his enemies under his feet. What! you find this horrible expectation too far off; alas, it is too near for numbers of unhappy wretches; then the good and the evil shall be separated for ever, and that shall be, as the Scripture says " the time for every purpose."†

In the mean time, all that happens to us, O my God, is thy doing, and for this purpose, that it may turn to our good. We shall in eternity, by thy light, perceive, that that which we now desire

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* Psalm xxxvii. 2. † Eccles. iii. 17.

would prove fatal to us, and that which we wish to avoid, is essential to our happiness.

O deceitful pleasures, I will no longer call you by that name, since you have only served to make me wretched. O blessed cross, which God lays on me, and with which my weak nature thinks itself overburthened, though the blinded world regards you as an evil, you shall no more be such to me; may I rather be for ever dumb, than speak this accursed language of the world; thou art my true God, it is thou that humblest me, that detachest me from the world, that makest me feel my misery, and the vanity of all my earthly affections. Blessed be thou, O God of truth, who hast fastened me to the cross with thy Son, to make me, like him, the everlasting object of thy love!

Let it not be said, that God does not minutely observe what passes among men; O ye blind that say this, ye know not what God is: as all that is, is only by the communication of his infinity; as all that has understanding, has it only by the emanation of his soverign reason, so all that acts, acts only by the impression of his supreme activity: it is he who does all in all; it is he that every moment of our lives, is the respiration of our breasts, the motion of our limbs, the light of our eyes, the understanding of our minds, and the soul of our souls; all that is in us, life, motion,

thought or will, comes by the impression of that eternal life, power, thought and will.

How then, O my God, canst thou be ignorant of any thing transacted in us, which is only done by thee? How canst thou be indifferent to the evil, which would not be committed but by our internally resisting thee; or to the good, which we can only do so far as it shall please thee to do it in us? This attention costs thee nothing; if thou couldst cease to have it, all would perish: there could no longer be a creature that could either think, or will, or subsist. O how little do men know their own weakness and nothingness, or thy power and boundless activity, when they imagine that thou couldst be fatigued, by being attentive and active in so many different places. Wherever fire is, there it burns: we must extinguish it that it may cease to burn, so active and devouring is it in its nature: thus in God all is action, life and motion; he is, as the Scripture says, "a consuming fire,"* wherever he is, he does all; and as he is every where, he does all things in all places. He makes, as we have seen, a perpetual and constantly renewed creation of bodies, and he is no less every moment a Creator of free and intelligent creatures: he gives them a reason, a will, and, in different degrees, a good will, conformable to his

* Heb. xii. 29.

own, for as St. Paul says, "he worketh in us both to will and to do." *

This is then what thou art, O my God, or at least what thou doest in thy works: for no man can approach that source of glory which dazzles our eyes, to comprehend all that thou art in thyself. But thou dost enable me to see and know clearly that thou art in all, and that thou makest use even of the evils and imperfections of thy creatures, to bring about the good things thou hast resolved on. In the character of the vexatious and impertinent, thou dost torment the faithful soul that is jealous of liberty in its occupations, and consequently stands in need of being discomposed, that it may die to the pleasure of freedom and regularity in all its good works. It is thou, my God, who makest use of slanderous tongues, to tear the reputation of the innocent, who have occasion to add to their innocence, the sacrifice of their reputation, which was too dear to them. It is thou that, by the ill offices and malicious subtilties of envious persons, dost overthrow the prosperity of such of thy servants, as still remain too much attached to that vain prosperity. It is thou that casteth into the grave, those to whom life is a continual danger, and death a grace which places them in security. It is thou that dost make the death of these persons a very bitter remedy indeed,

* Phil. ii. 13.

but a very salutary one, to those who were attached to them, by a too lively and tender friendship: thus the same stroke that takes one to save him, detaches the other and prepares him for death, by depriving him of those who were too dear to him. After this manner, O my God, thou dost mercifully shed bitterness on all that is not of thee, that our hearts, which are formed to love thee, and to live in thy love, may be constrained to return to thee, perceiving that all other support will certainly fail us.

My God, thou art all love, and consequently all jealousy: O jealous God, for so thou dost call thyself, a divided heart provokes thee, but a strayed heart excites thy compassion. Thou art infinite in all, in love, as in wisdom and power. When thou dost love, it is as God: to save what is dear to thee, thou dost shake the heavens and the earth: thou art become a man, nay an infant, the lowest of men loaded with reproaches, sufferings, the infamy, death, and pain of the cross: all this is not too much for infinite love. A finite love and limited wisdom, cannot comprehend it, but how can the finite comprehend the infinite? it has neither eyes to see, nor an heart capable of feeling it; the vile imprisoned heart of man, and his presumptuous wisdom are offended at it; they know not God in these excesses of his wisdom; as for, me I adore him in the character of infinite: it is that love which is the cause of all, even of

the evils that we suffer, since by the evil he prepares us for the reception of the truest good.

But when shall we return love for love? when shall we truly seek him, who seeks us, and carries us in his arms? In his tender and paternal bosom we forget him; it is the sweetness of his gifts that prevents our reflecting upon the giver; those favours which he is every moment bestowing on us, instead of melting us into love, only serve to direct our attention from its proper object. He is the source of all pleasures; we his creatures are but the great channels of his mercy, and the channels make us regard the source as nothing. This immense love pursues us every where, and we constantly fly from it. It is every where, and yet we see it no where. We think ourselves alone, when we have noly it with us; it does all and yet we account it as nothing; we esteem our affairs desperate, when we have no resource but in its providence, as if omnipotent love could do nothing. O monstrous error, which occasions the overthrow of the whole man! I can add no more on this subject, this absurdity of the creature is so provoking.

Nevertheless, O Fountain of Love, thou sufferest it, and seemest, by thy excessive patience, to flatter our ingratitude; even those who desire to love thee, do so only for themselves, for their own comfort and security. Where shall we find those that love but thee alone? where are they that

love thee, because they were created for that single purpose? Where are they? I see them not. Are there any such on earth? if not, let there be such. To what purpose serves the whole world, if thou art not beloved, and if mankind do not love thee, so as to love themselves in thee? This was thy will, in causing that to proceed from thee, which was not thyself; thy will was to create beings, who receiving all from thee, should without reserve return all to thee again.

O my God, O Fountain of Love, love thyself in me: then shalt thou be loved as thou art lovely. I would not willingly exist, but to consume myself before thee, as a lamp incessantly burns before thine altars. I am not for myself, there is no other being but thou alone who is for itself; nothing for me, all is for thee, nor is it too much. I am even jealous of myself, for thy sake, against myself. May I rather perish than suffer that the love which should stretch forth after thee, should ever recoil upon myself. Love, O immense love, love in thy weak creature, thy sovereign beauty. O infinite love and goodness, burn, consume, transform, annihilate my heart, make me a perfect burnt offering.

CHAP. III.

On the pure love of God.

The "Lord hath made all things for himself,"* saith the Scripture: He owes to himself all things he has made, and can never at any time relinquish any of his rights in them. The rational and free creature is not less his, than the creature without reason and will. He essentially and wholly recalls to himself alone, all that is in the irrational creature, and wills that the rational creature, should likewise restore itself whole, and without reserve to him alone. It is true he wills our happiness, but our happiness is not the principal end of his design, nor an end proportioned to that of his glory. It is even for his glory that he wills our happiness: our happiness is but a subordinate end, which he has made relative to the last and essential end, which is his glory. He is in himself the one and essential end of all things.

To enter into this essential end of our creation, it is necessary to prefer God to ourselves, and no further to desire our own happiness, but in order to his glory; otherwise we shall destroy his arrangement of things. It is not our own interest in our happiness, which ought to make us desire his glory; on the contrary, it is the desire of his glory;

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* Prov. xvi. 4.

that should make us desire our own happiness, as a thing which it has pleased him to make, conducive to his glory. It is true, that there are good people, who are not capable of this so absolute preference of God to themselves; but the implied preference is at least necessary; whilst the absolute preference, which is the most perfect, is only suitable to those to whom God gives light and strength, so to prefer him to themselves, that they no further desire their own happiness, but for his glory.

The reason why men are so unwilling to understand this truth, and that it is so disagreeable to them, is that they love themselves, and wish to love themselves only from self-interest. They conceive generally and superficially, that they ought to love God more than all his creatures; but they do not understand, what it is to love God more than themselves, and themselves only for his sake. They make use of these lofty expressions without trouble, because they do it without entering into all the force of them; but they tremble as soon as it is explained to them, that we must prefer God and his glory, to ourselves and our happiness, in such a manner, that we should love his glory more than our own happiness, and that we should feel the necessity of making one conducive to the other, as the subordinate to the principal end.

It would seem astonishing, that men should find

so much difficulty in understanding a rule so plain, so just, so essential to a creature; but that man as soon as he is "entangled in himself," as St. Austin says, sees nothing beyond the narrow bounds of self-love, in which he encloses himself: he every moment loses sight of his being a creature, that he owes himself nothing, since he himself is not his own; but that he owes himself without reserve, to the good pleasure of him, by whom alone he is. Tell him this grievous truth, and he dare not deny it; but it passes unobserved, and he is always insensibly returning to account with God, so as to find in him his interest.

It is alleged, that God has given us a natural inclination for happiness, which is himself. In this he might have desired to facilitate our union with him, and to have implanted in us a propensity for our happiness, as he has for our food: but we should carefully distinguish the delight he has implanted in us, at the sight of himself, which is our happiness, from the strong bias, which the fall of the first man has sown in our own hearts, to make us our own centre, and to make the love of God depend on the happiness we seek in that love. Besides the matter in question is not relative to any natural, necessary and unpremeditated inclination. We need not fear falling into illusion, by a natural and unpremeditated inclination for happiness. These involuntary desires, which are less desires than necessary inclinations, are as natural

to man as weight to a stone. I only speak of our voluntary and premeditated acts, which we may or may not do. With regard to those voluntary acts, the motive of our own happiness is not prohibited: God is well pleased that we should find our own interest in our union with him: but this should be the least motive, and the least desired by us: we ought to desire the glory of God more than our own happiness: we ought not to desire that happiness, but to make it conducive to his glory, with such a distinction as there is between what we wish for in a lesser, and what we wish for in a higher degree. Our interest ought to affect us incomparably less than his glory. This is what man, attached to himself, since his fall, finds so difficult to comprehend. This is a truth in the very essence of man, which ought to subdue all hearts, but which nevertheless offends them when they dive into it. But let us do justice to God and ourselves. Did we make ourselves? do we belong to God or to ourselves? has he made us for our own sakes, or for his? to whom are we indebted for all we have? is it for our happiness, or his glory, that he has created us? if for his glory, we ought then to conform to the essential end of our creation; we should desire his glory more than our own happiness, in such a manner, as that our happiness may be conducive to his glory.

I do not, therefore, speak of a natural and spontaneous inclination of man towards beatitude.

How many natural propensities, and inclinations are there in men, which they are never able either to destroy or diminish, but which they do not always follow? Thus the inclination that we have to preserve our being, is one of the strongest, and most natural: that which impels us to search after happiness, is not more invincible than that which actuates us to self-preservation: a state of beatitude is only the best kind of existence, as says St. Augustine. The inclination therefore that we have to be happy, is no more than the continuation of that which impels us to preserve our life and being. It may notwithstanding happen, that this propensity will be resisted in acts of deliberation. How many Greeks and Romans have truly devoted themselves to certain death: how many do we see who have died by their own hands, in spite of this violent inclination, so firmly rooted in our nature.

Again, I here speak of our free actions, performed for the love of God, and the motives for happiness, which may urge us to them. We have already seen, that the motive of our particular interest in the beatitude, is only allowable whilst it is a subordinate desire, relative to the great, and governing motive, which is the glory of God. Let us only compare two different ways of thus prefering God to ourselves. The first is of loving him altogether, both as perfect in himself, and as a source of blessings to us; so that the motive of

our happiness, though less strong, may notwithstanding support the love we have for the divine perfection; and that we should love him in some degree less, if he was not a source of blessings to us. The second is, of our loving God, whom we know to be pouring his blessings on us, and from whom we wish to receive our happiness, because he has promised it; but not of loving him through a self-interested motive for that happiness we expect from him, but solely for himself, because of his perfection; so that we should love him as much, even if he was never to be a blessing to us, which is supposing an impossibility. It is manifest that the latter of these two kinds of loves, which is the disinterested love, more perfectly accomplishes the whole and sole end of the creature, that it leaves it nothing, it gives all to God alone, and consequently is more perfect than that love of God which is blended with our own interest.

We are not to suppose that the man whose love is disinterested, does not love the reward: he loves it so far as it is God himself, and not as it is his own interest; he wishes for it, because God desires that he should wish for it: it is the will of God, and not his own interest that he regards in it: he loves himself only for the love of God, as a stranger, and that he may love what God has made.

It is evident that God, infinitely perfect in himself, is insufficient to support the love of the one,

who requires to be animated by the selfish motive of the happiness he finds in God. The other has no occasion for this motive; to love what is in itself perfect, he need only know the perfection of the object. The man who stands in need of the motive of his own happiness, is enamoured with this motive, because he is sensible his love would be less strong if deprived of that support. A lame man who cannot walk without a crutch, will not consent that it it should be taken from him; he is sensible of his weakness, he is afraid of falling, and he is in the right of it: but he ought not to be offended at seeing a man sound and vigorous, who does not want the same support. The sound man walks better without the crutch, but he ought not to despise him who cannot move without it. Let the man, who to love God, is obliged to add the consideration of his own happiness to that of the supreme perfection, humbly acknowledge that there is in the treasures of grace a perfection superior to his own; and let him glorify God for the gifts he finds in others, without being envious of them. At the same time, let him who is drawn to love independent of interest, follow that attraction; but let him neither judge himself or others; let him attribute nothing to himself; let him be ready to believe he is not in the state he appears to be in; let him be docile, yielding, dubious of himself, and edified by every degree of virtue he sees in his neighbour, who still has occasion to have his love supported by self-interest.

But without doubt, pure and disinterested love is manifestly more perfect, than that which requires to be supported by the consideration of our own interests.

If any one imagines that this pure love is unattainable and chimerical, that it is a vain refinement, which may become the source of delusion, let him but hear me for a moment. Nothing is impossible to God: he calls himself a jealous God he only detains us in the pilgrimage of this life, to conduct us to perfection. To call this degree of love a chimerical and dangerous refinement, is rashly to charge with delusion, the greatest saints of all ages, who have admitted this kind of love, and made the highest degree of the spiritual life to consist in it.

But if my reader still refuses to acknowledge the purity of this love, I conjure him to answer me precisely the questions I am going to put to him. Is not eternal life a pure grace, and the completion of all graces? Is it not our faith, that the kingdom of heaven is only due to us upon the promise which is perfectly free, and upon the application of that which is equally free, the merits of Jesus Christ? The favour is not less of pure grace, than the promise on which it is founded: his is that we constantly profess to our strayed brethern, when we justify ourselves to them, with regard to to the word *merit*, made use of by the

church, by d eclaringthat all our merits are not strictly founded on right, but solely on a promise made through pure mercy. Thus eternal life, which is the end of God's decree, is the free gift of God, and it is with respect to this, that all other graces are bestowed. This grace, which includes all others, is not founded on any title but the free promise, joined with the application, also free, of the merits of Jesus Christ. The promise itself which is the foundation of all, is not supported but on the pure mercy of God, his good pleasure, and the good purpose of his will. Thu sin this order, all is reduced to the free and gratuitous will of the Almighty.

These undoubted principles being laid down, I will suppose that God was to annihilate my soul the moment it leaves my body. This supposition is only impossible, because of the promise purely gratuitous. God then might have excepted my soul in particular out of his general promise, freely made to others. Who dare deny that he may, according to my supposition, annihilate my soul? The creature who owes not his existence to himself, is only so much as the absolute will of his Creator makes him to be: that he may not fall into his original nothingness, the Creator must incessantly renew the favour of his creation, by preserving him through the same power that created him. I suppose then a thing very possible, since I only suppose a simple exception to a rule purely

gratuitous and absolute. I suppose that God, who makes all other souls immortal, will finish the duration of mine at the moment of my death: I suppose likewise, that he has revealed to me his design. Nobody dare say that he cannot do so.

These very possible suppositions being granted, there is no longer promise, nor reward, nor happiness, nor hope of a future life for me. I can no longer hope either to possess God, or see his face, or love him eternally, or to be beloved by him, beyond this life. I suppose I am just dying: I have but one moment to live, which is to be followed by a total and everlasting annihilation: how shall I employ that moment? I conjure my reader to answer me with the greatest precision. In that last moment, shall I cease to love God, because he he is no longer to me a source of blessings? shall I abandon the essential end of my creation? God in excluding me from an happy eternity, which he did not owe me: has he given up what was essentially owing to him? has his work ceased to be made for his pure glory? has he lost the rights of a Creator over me? has he, with regard to me, dispensed with the duties of the creature, who essentially owes all that he is, to him by whom he is? Is it not evident by this possible supposition, that I ought to love God solely for himself, without expecting any reward for my love, and though certain of being excluded for ever from all happiness; so that this last moment of my life, which will be

followed by an everlasting annihilation, ought to be indispensibly finished by an act of love, purely and fully disinterested? But if he, on whom God bestows nothing for eternity, owes so much to God, how much does he owe him, to whom he gives himself wholly, and for ever? Just now I am going to be annihilated; I shall never see God; he refuses me his kingdom, which he gives to others; he will neither love me, nor be beloved by me in eternity; I am notwithstanding, obliged in my dying moments to love him, with all my heart and all my strength; and if I refuse to do so, am a monster in the creation. And will you, my reader, for whom God prepares, without any desert of yours, the eternal possession of himself—will you reject as a chimerical refinement, this love, of which even I ought to give you the example? will you love God less than me, because he loves you more? shall the reward only serve to make you interested in your love? if God's love to you was less than it is, you ought to love him without any consideration of the reward. Is this then the fruit of the promises, and the blood of Jesus Christ, to remove men further from a generous and disinterested love of God? Because he offers you the completion of all happiness in himself, will you only love him in such a degree, as you are animated by the motive of that infinite reward? Because the kingdom of heaven is offered to you, from which I am excluded, is that a good reason for

your not loving God, without the motive of your own glory and felicity?

Do not say that this happiness is God himself. God could, if he so pleased, be no more a source of blessings to you, than he is to me. I must love him, though he is not so to me; why then should not you resolve to love him, without being supported by the motive of his being a source of blessings to you? why do you tremble at the very mention of a love not supported by interest? if eternal happiness was justly due to us, and that God in creating men was obliged, as a debt, to pay them eternal life, my supposition might be denied: but this cannot be said without manifest impiety. The greatest of all graces, which is eternal life, would be no longer a grace; the reward would be our due, independent of the promise: God would owe eternal existence and happiness to his creature; he could no more destroy it, it would become a necessary being; but this doctrine is monstrous; on the other hand, my supposition evinces the rights of God, and shews by possible cases, where disinterested love would be necessary. If these cases are inconsistent with the order established by the free promise, it is because God does not judge us fit for these great trials, and is content with an implicit preference of him and his glory, to ourselves and our own glory, which is as the seed of pure love, in the hearts of all the faithful. To conclude, my supposition, in which I compare

a man on the point of annihilation, with him who has received the promise of eternal life, makes it very apparent how much superior a disinterested love is to that which is united with interest.

Evidences from the Heathens.

But until Christians are capable of truly comprehending the infinite rights of God over his creatures, I would endeavour at least to make them enter into their own hearts, and there consider the idea they have of what they call, among themselves, friendship.

Each man, in the society of his friends, would be loved without the motive of self-interest, and solely for himself. Alas, if man, unworthy of all love, cannot bear to be loved through interest, how dare we believe that God will not have the same delicacy? We are immensely subtle to discover even the most latent motives of interest, decency, pleasure, or honour, which attach our friends to us; we despond when their love is only founded on gratitude, and much more when it is the effect of other more disgusting motives: we wish to be loved through pure inclination, esteem and admiration. Friendship is so jealous and delicate, that the smallest mixture of any thing else hurts it; it cannot bear in the friend any thing, but the unmingled unreserved gift of the whole heart. He who loves would, in the transport of

his passion, be loved solely for his own sake, would be preferred above all things, and alone, that the whole world may be sacrificed to him, that we should forget ourselves, and count ourselves as nothing, that we may be entirely at his disposal: such is the frantic jealousy and extravagant injustice of passionate lovers; this jealousy is nothing else but the tyranny of self-love.

We need only examine ourselves, to find in us this fund of idolatry; and whoever does not discover it, does not sufficiently know himself. That which in us, is the most ridiculous and odious injustice, is in God the most perfect righteousness. Nothing is so common and so shameful among men as being jealous: but God, who cannot give up his glory to another, calls himself a jealous God, and his jealousy is essential to his perfection. Examine then, thou that readest this, the corruption of thine heart, and let thy jealousy with regard to friendship serve to shew thee the infinite delicacy of divine love. When you find in your heart this delicacy, with regard to the friendship you require from your friends, you never consider it as a chimerical refinement; on the contrary, you would be offended at the grossness of such friends as had no idea of this delicacy in friendship. It is God alone you would debar of it: you are unwilling that he should require to be loved in the manner you claim the love of your friends: you cannot believe that his grace can procure for him in this

life, such worshippers as love him, in the manner you are not ashamed to desire yourself to be beloved. O judge yourself, and at last give glory to God.

I grant that profane men, who have this idea of pure friendship, do not follow it; and that all their friendship is without grace, it is but a self-love subtilely disguised: but still they have this idea of pure friendship. Shall they then retain the idea, when the object is only a vile and corruptible creature, and shall we alone refuse to acknowledge it, when the object of our love is God?

The very heathens had this pure idea of friendship; and we need only read their writings, and wonder that Christians will not allow us to love God by his grace, as the heathens thought they were obliged to love one another, to merit the name of friends.

Let us hear Cicero.* "To be impatient," says he, "on account of what we suffer in friendship, "is loving ourselves and not our friends." He afterwards adds, "that friendship can only subsist "between good men," that is to say, between those who, strictly adhering to its principles, always prefer what is just to what the vulgar call profit: "otherwise," says he, "interest being the "rule and motive of friendship, the less virtuous,

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* De Amic.

" who have more wants and cravings than others,
" would be the fittest to unite in friendship, be-
" cause they are more eager in loving what is for
" their interest. We are therefore of opinion,"
adds Cicero, " that we should seek friendship,
" not for the hope of any profit or advantage to be
" derived from it, but because the profit and ad-
" vantages is in itself. Self-interested men are
" deprived of this excellent and most natural friend-
" ship, which is to be sought by and for itself
" alone: they let not their own experience and
" examples instruct them to how great an height
" the power of friendship may be carried. Every
" one loves himself, not to be recompensed for
" his love, but because every one in himself is
" dear to himself.—If this rule is not extended to
" friendship, one can never find a true friend; for
" he only is one's true friend, who is a second-self.
" —But most men unjustly, not to say impudently,
" claim such a friend as they would not be them-
" selves, and require from him what they would
" not give."

Cicero could not carry the disinterestedness of friendship to a greater height, than by requiring that our friend should be dear to us of himself, without any motive, as we are dear to ourselves without any hopes which excite us to that love. Self-love is without doubt, in this sense, the perfect model of disinterested friendship. Horace, though an epicurean, has argued upon this principle, for

the union of friends among themselves; when speaking of the philosophical conversations he had in the country, he says,* we enquired whether men were happy by riches or virtue; and whether self-interest or perfection alone be the motive of friendship:

> ———Utrumne
> Divitiis homines, an sint virtute beati?
> Quidve ad amicitias, usus rectumne trahat nos?

Thus the heathens, and even the epicurean heathens, thought of friendship for creatures unworthy of being loved. It is on this idea of pure friendship, that divines distinguish with respect to God, between the love they call friendship, and other loves, and between the friends of God and his servants.

This so pure idea of friendship is not solely to be found in Cicero; he took it from the doctrine of Socrates, as explained in the works of Plato. These two great philosophers, one of which relates in his dialogues, the discourses of the other; would have us fix our hearts on what they call το καλον, which signifies altogether, the *beautiful* and *good*, that is to say, the *perfect*, for the sole love of what is beautiful, good, true and perfect in itself. For this reason they often say, we must

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* Lib. II. Sat. 6.

set no value on *that which is made*, το γινομενον, that is to say, a *transitory being*, that we may unite ourselves to that *which is*, that is to say, a *perfect being* which is immutable, and which they call το ον, *that which is*. Hence Cicero, who only repeats their maxims, says,* that "if we would but "see with our own eyes the beauty of virtue, we "should be ravished with the love of its excel- "lence."

Plato makes Socrates, in his treatise called the Banquet, say, "that there is something more di- "vine in him that loves, than in him that is be- "loved." Here then is the utmost delicacy of the purest love. He who is beloved, and wishes to be so, is taken up with himself: but he who loves without thinking of being loved, has in him what is most divine in love, viz. transport, forgetfulness of self, and disinterestedness.

"Beauty," says this philosopher, "does not con- "sist in any particular things, such as animals, "the earth, or the heavens, but is in and by "itself, being always uniform with itself. All "other things that are beautiful, partake of "this sovereign beauty in such a manner, that "whether they grow up or perish, they neither "take from, nor add any thing to it, and it suffers "no loss by them: if any one advances himself in

* De Offic.

"true friendship, he begins to see this beauty, "and almost touches the goal of perfection."

It is easy to perceive that Plato speaks of a love of beauty in itself, without any regard to interest. It is this universal beauty which ravishes the soul, and makes it neglect every particular beauty. This philosopher affirms in the same dialogue, that love deifies a man, that it inspires and transports him. "There is no person," says he, "so bad, but what the love of virtue can make a "God of, so as that he becomes like the sovereign "beauty in nature; and as Homer says that a "God inspired some heroes, this is what love does "to lovers, formed by love; those alone who love, "are willing to die for one another." After this, Plato cites the example of Alcesta, who died to preserve her husband. That then, which according to Plato, makes a man a deity, is, by love, to prefer another so far to ourselves, as to forget and sacrifice ourselves, and to be willing to be esteemed as nothing. This love, according to him, is a divine inspiration: it is the immutable beauty which transports man out of himself, and renders him like itself, through virtue.

This was the idea of friendship among the heathens. Pythias and Damon, who lived under Dionysius the tyrant, were willing to die, one for the other, and the astonished tyrant sighed, when he saw these two friends so disinterested. This

idea of perfect disinterestedness reigned in the policy of all the ancient legislators. Man was to prefer the laws and his country to himself, because justice required it; and he was to prefer to himself what is called beauty, goodness, justice, and perfection. This order or law was to regulate every thing, but chiefly man's self. He was not to think of making himself happy, by obeying this order, but was, on the contrary, for the love of it, to devote himself to death and destruction, without hope of a remedy. Thus Socrates, in Plato's book Crito, chooses rather to die than make his escape, for fear of disobeying the laws which condemned him to prison: thus the same Socrates, in the dialogue called Gorgias, describes a man who accuses himself, and who devotes himself to death, rather than elude by his silence, the rigour of the laws, and the authority of the magistrates. All the legislators and philosophers who have reasoned about laws, have supposed, as a fundamental principle of society and government, that we must prefer the public to ourselves, not through the hope of some interest, but only through the sole disinterested love of order, which is beauty, justice, and virtue itself. It was for this idea of order and justice, that a man was to die, that is to say, according to the heathens, to lose all he had that was real, to be reduced to a mere shadow, and not even to know whether this shadow was not a fiction of the poets. Shall Christians then refuse to do as much for God infi-

nitely perfect, whom they know, as these heathens thought themselves obliged to do, for an abstract and confused idea of order, justice, and virtue?

Plato often says, that the love of beauty is the whole good of man; that man cannot be happy in himself; and that what is most divine for him, is to go out of himself by love: and indeed, the pleasure we feel in the transport of our passions, is but an effect of the bent of the soul to get out of its narrow bounds, and to love out of itself the infinite beauty. When this transport fixes on any transient and deceitful beauty, which shines forth in the creatures, it is the divine love strayed and misplaced: it is in itself a divine arrow, but misguided: that which is in itself divine, becomes illusion and folly when it lights upon a vain image of the perfect good, such as a created being, which is but a shadow of the Supreme; but, in fine, that love which prefers infinite perfection to itself, is, as Plato says, a divine and inspired motion.

This impression is given to man from his original. His perfection is so to go out of himself, through love, that he incessantly wishes to persuade both others and himself, that he loves those to whom he is united in friendshlp, without any regard to himself. This idea is so strong, notwithstanding self-love, that he would be ashamed to

confess he loved no one, without some interested views. The reason why men so carefully disguise all the motives of self-love in their friendships, is to avoid the shame of appearing to love themselves in others. As nothing is so odious as the idea of an heart always taken up with itself, so nothing flatters us so agreeably as certain generous actions, which persuade the world and ourselves that we have done good for the love of good itself, without regard to ourselves in it. Even self-love pays homage to this disinterested virtue, by the subtilties it avails itself of to appear like it; so true is it that man, who is not of himself, was not made to seek himself, but to be entirely given up to him who made him. His glory and his perfection are to go out of himself, to forget himself, to lose himself, and be absorbed in the pure love of infinite beauty.

This love terrifies the man who is a lover of himself, and accustomed to make himself the centre of every thing. This thought alone is sufficient to make self-love tremble, and to shock a secret inbred pride which always insensibly brings back to self, the end to which we ourselves ought continually to tend.

But this idea which so alarms us, is the foundation of all friendship and justice. We can neither reconcile self-love to this idea, nor abandon it: it is what in us is most divine. It cannot be said

that this thought or idea is but a vain imagination. When men invent chimeras, they invent them to please and flatter themselves. Nothing is less natural to man, unjust, vain, and intoxicated with pride, than to think thus in opposition to his self-love. Not only the realizing this idea by practice is a prodigy of virtue above man, but even the finding this idea in us, is a wonder that ought to strike us with amazement. It can be nothing, but a principal, infinitely superior to us, that can teach us to raise ourselves thus entirely above ourselves. What is it that could have given to man, sick of an excess of self-love, carried even to adoration, this elevated thought of counting himself as nothing, of becoming a stranger to himself, and loving himself only through charity, as he does his neighbour? What is it that could have taught him to be jealous of himself against himself, for an invisible object that should for ever efface *self*, and leave no trace of it behind? This idea alone renders man divine, inspires and fills him with infinity.

I acknowledge that the heathens, who so much exalted this virtue of disinterestedness, practised it but badly. No one believes more firmly than I do, that all love, without the grace of God, can never be any thing but a self-love disguised. Nothing but a being infinitely perfect—as the object by its infinite perfection, and as the cause through its infinite power—can raise us out of ourselves,

and make us prefer that which is not us, to our own being. I allow that self-love among the heathens, vainly boasted itself with the appearance of pure love: but, however, they did boast of it. Even those whose pride had the greatest ascendency over them, were charmed with the beautiful idea of virtue, and a disinterested friendship: they carried it within them, and could neither efface it nor obscure it; they could neither follow it nor oppose it. Shall Christians then oppose it? will they not be contented, like the heathens, to admit it without faithfully following it? even the vanity of the heathens with regard to this virtue, shews its excellence. For example, the praise which all antiquity has bestowed on Alcesta, had missed its aim, and would have been false and ridiculous, if it was not really beautiful and virtuous in Alcesta to die for her husband. Without this fundamental principle, her action would have been an extravagant madness, a dreadful despair. All heathen antiquity determines otherwise; it says with Plato, that "there is nothing more divine, than to forget ourselves for the beloved object." Alcesta is the admiration of men for being willing to die, and be no more than a vain shadow, that he whom she loved might live. This forgetfulness of self, this total sacrifice of our being, this loss of ourselves for ever, is, in the eyes of all the heathens, what is most divine in man; what deifies him, and brings him almost to the goal of perfection.

Such was the idea of virtue and pure friendship, impressed on the hearts of men who never were acquainted with the creation of man, who were blinded with self love, and who were alienated from the life of God.

CHAP. IV.

Advice concerning Prayer, and the principal exercises of Piety.

I. The most excellent prayer is nothing else but the love of God. Its excellency consists not in the multitude of our words, for they are not necessary to make known unto God the sentiments of our hearts. True prayer then is that of the heart, and the heart can only ask that which it desires. To pray then, is to desire; but this desire must be according to the will of God. He who does not from the bottom of his heart desire that which he prays for, prays deceitfully, and though he passes whole days in prayer, or meditation, or the exciting of pious sentiments, he does not pray truly if he desires not that which he asks.

II. How few are there who really pray! for where are they that desire what is truly good? These good things are external and internal crosses, mortifications, the renunciation of our own will, the death of self, and that the kingdom of God

may be established on the ruins of self-love; not to desire these things, is not to pray; to pray, we must desire seriously, constantly, effectually, and with regard to all the particulars of our life; otherwise prayer is but an illusion, like a dream, in which the deluded wretch rejoices in the imaginary possession of a happiness that is far from him. Alas! how many souls are there full of themselves, and an imaginary desire of perfection in the midst of their voluntary failings, who have never made this true prayer of the heart! It is on this principle that St. Austin says, "He who loves much, prays much, and he who loves little, prays little."

III. On the contrary, they always pray, whose hearts always feel true love and desire. That love which is hidden in the bottom of their souls, prays without ceasing, even while the spirit cannot be actually attentive. God ceases not to regard in the soul that desire which he forms himself, though the soul is not always conscious of it. This disposition of the desire reaches the heart of God; it is a secret voice which perpetually draws down his mercies; it is this *spirit* which as St. Paul says, "helpeth our infirmities, and maketh intercession "for us, with groanings which cannot be ut-"tered."*

* Rom. viii. 26

IV. This love solicits God to give us what we want, to overlook our defects, and regard the sincerity of our intentions; it blots out our smaller offences, and purifies us as a consuming fire; it prays for us according to the will of God, for we know not what to pray for as we ought, and would often ask what would prove hurtful to us, as certain pious fervours, sensible tastes, and an apparent perfection, which would only serve to nourish the natural life, and a confidence in our own strength; instead of which, this love causes us blindly to submit ourselves to all the influences of grace, and by making us thus perfectly abandoned to the whole will of God, disposes us for the accomplishment of all his unknown designs.

V. Then we will all, and yet will nothing. What God chooses to give us is, the precise accomplishment of our own will; for we will all that he wills, and nothing but what he would have us will. Thus this state is a state of the most perfect prayer: it is an operation of the heart which includes all prayer. "The Spirit asketh in us,"* what the Spirit himself would give us. Even when we are busied in outward things, and that the discharge of our duty in that state in which Providence has placed us, necessarily causes distraction, we nevertheless carry within us a fire which never goes out, but on the contrary, nourishes a secret

* Rom. viii. 26.

prayer, which is a lamp incessantly burning before the throne of God. "If we sleep our heart "waketh.—Blessed are those whom the Lord shall "find thus waking."*

VI. To preserve this spirit of prayer, so necessary to our union with God, we must observe two principal things; the one is to endeavour to nourish it; the other, to avoid every thing that may deprive us of it.

That which nourishes it, is regular reading, vocal prayer at stated times, frequent recollection in the course of the day, retirement when we find occasion for it, or are advised to it by those experienced persons with whom we consult, and lastly, the use of the blessed sacrament.

That which deprives us of the spirit of prayer, ought to fill us with terror, and calls for all our caution. Thus we ought to fly those vain companions who dissipate us too much, those pleasures which excite the passions, every thing that awakens a relish for the world, and those old inclinations which have been fatal to us.

The particulars of these things are infinite, so that we can here only mention them in general, each

* Cant. v. 2. Luke xii. 37.

individual requiring a variety of different cautions.

VII. To nourish this spirit of prayer, we should choose such books as instruct us in our duties and our faults; which, by shewing us the greatness of God, teach us what we owe him, and how we fail to discharge it: for I speak not here of such barren readings as only tend to excite some tender and transient affections; "the tree must "bring forth fruit,"* and we cannot believe that the root is alive, unless it evidences its being so by its fruitfulness.

VIII. The first effect of sincere love is, the desire of knowing all we ought to do, to please the well-beloved of our heart; not to feel this, can proceed from nothing but loving ourselves, while we pretend to love God; it is to serve God for our own pleasure, instead of sacrificing ourselves to his glory. It is not such a love as this that pleases God in his children. Cost what it will, we must know and practise without reserve, all that he requires of us.

IX. As to the time for prayer, that should be regulated by the leisure, opportunity, disposition and attraction of each person.

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* Mat. vii. 17.

Meditation is not prayer, but it is the necessary foundation of it. It makes us sensible of those truths which God has revealed to us. By meditation, we shall learn not only the depth of all the mysteries of Christianity, and the truths of the gospel; but also all that these truths ought to impress upon our minds, in order to our regeneration; these truths ought to be a long time sinking into our hearts, as the dye by degrees tinges the wool that imbibes it.

X. These truths should become so familiar to us, that by viewing them closely and perpetually, we may be accustomed to judge of every thing by them; they should be the only light by which we ought to regulate our practice, as the rays of the sun are our only light to judge of the figure and colour of bodies.

When these truths are, as I may say, thus incorporated with us, our prayer then becomes real and fruitful: till then it is a mere deception; we imagine that we saw to the very bottom of these truths, whereas we only touched the surface. All our most lively and tender sentiments, our most vigorous resolutions, our most clear and distinct views, were but as a poor unformed blossom, compared to that which God now unfolds to us.

XI. When the divine light begins to shine in us, we then, by the means of that true light, see every thing clearly; there is no truth to which we do not instantaneously acquiesce, as we have no need of reasoning to acknowledge the splendour of the rising sun, when its beams strike our eyes. Our union with God in prayer then must necessarily be the consequence of our fidelity to his will, and by it we must judge of our love for him.

XII. Meditation ought to become daily more and more profound and intimate; I say profound, because when we humbly meditate on the truths of Christianity, we sink down into them more and more, so as continually to discover new treasures in them: I say intimate, because the deeper we dive into them, the more they also penetrate us, so as to enter even into the substance of our souls. Then one simple word enters deeper than whole discourses formerly did.

XIII. The very same things which we have heard an hundred times with cold indifference, and without reaping any advantage from them, now nourish the soul with a hidden manna, whose flavour remains with us a long time. In a word, we must be very careful to imbibe from these truths that have particularly affected us, all the nourishment they are capable of affording; while they have yet any to impart, it is a certain sign that we stand in need of them; they even nourish us with-

out any precise or distinct instructions; it is an inexpressible something, which operates more than the most elaborate reasonings; we see the truth, we love it, we abide in it, it fortifies our minds, it detaches us from ourselves, and we ought to dwell upon it as long as possible.

XIV. With regard to the manner of our meditation, it ought not to consist either of subtilties, or abstruse reasonings; but to be simple, natural, and drawn from the subjects on which we meditate.

We should meditate on few truths, and those leisurely, without using any effort, or endeavouring to discover some uncommon meaning in them.

We should not consider any truth but with regard to the practice of it. To attain the full understanding of any truth, without taking all the necessary steps towards following it faithfully, cost what it will, is as St. Paul says, "to hold the truth in unrighteousness;"* it is to resist the truth impressed upon our minds, consequently the Holy Ghost, which is of all infidelities the most dreadful.†

XV. The manner of our praying, ought to be regulated by our experience. Those who have profited by regularity and set forms, ought not

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* Rom. i. 18. † Acts vii. 51.

to quit them; those who cannot subject themselves to such a method, should consider, with deference to the general opinion, that they are useful to others, and are recommended by the most pious and experienced persons. But in a word, as rules are given not to embarrass but assist us, when they only serve to perplex us, they should be laid aside.

XVI. The most natural way for beginners, is to take a book, and lay it down when they find themselves inwardly attracted by what they have read, and then make use of it again, when what they have read, no longer affords them internal nourishment. In general it is certain that those truths which we relish most, and which afford us a certain practical light, with regard to the sacrifices God requires from us, are those with which God marks out the path of grace, which we must follow without hesitation. The "Spirit bloweth "where it listeth; and where that is, there is "liberty."*

By degrees, reflections and reasonings decrease. Tender sentiments and affecting views increase the desires; this is what we are sufficiently instructed in, and convinced of by the Spirit. The ravished heart nourishes, warms, and elevates

* John iii. 8. 2. Cor. iii. 17.

itself; one word is now sufficient to engross it for a long time.

XVII. In fine, prayer always increases by the most simple and fixed prospects, so that there is no occasion for such a number of objects and considerations. We are with God as with a friend. At first we have a thousand things to say, and as many questions to ask; but after some time these particulars of conversation are exhausted, though it is impossible that the pleasure of friendly intercourse can ever be so; though we have nothing more to say, we are pleased at being together, at seeing each other, at being conscious that we are near one another; and with delighting ourselves in the enjoyment of a sweet and pure friendship; we say nothing, but that silence is expressive; we know that we are agreed in all things, and that our two hearts are in perfect union, the one incessantly pours itself into the other.

XVIII. It is thus in our commerce with God by prayer, which raises us to a simple and familiar union with him, that is beyond all expression or words. But it is God himself, that can alone form this kind of prayer in us; and nothing can be more rash or dangerous, than to suppose that we can attain it of ourselves, We must let ourselves be conducted step by step, by some person who is acquainted with the ways of God, and who has for

many years laid the immoveable foundation of an exact discipline, and of an entire death to himself, in all that regards morality.

XIX. As to retirement, and frequenting the sacrament, we must be directed by the person in whom we place our greatest confidence. He must pay some regard to our necessities, to the effect the communion has on us, and many other circumstances respecting each individual.

XX. Retirement depends on the leisure and necessities of our state. I say necessities, because it ought to be with regard to the nourishment of the soul, as it is with that of the body; when we find food necessary to enable us to perform our work, we should take it; otherwise our neglecting to do so, would expose us to faintness. I add leisure, because without this absolute occasion for nourishment, which I have just mentioned, we ought to fulfil the duties of our state, rather than follow our desire of fervour. A man who owes himself to the public, would offend God, should he think himself in union with him, while he passed that time in meditation and retirement, which was necessary for the discharge of the duties of his employment. The true union with God, consists in fulfilling his will in the most wearisome and laborious duties of our state, without relaxation, and in opposition to all our natural aversions.

XXI. The general cautions against dissipation are, to avoid as much as possible, all connexion and intimacy with people whose maxims are in opposition to those of Christianity, especially when these infectious maxims are such as we have formerly been seduced by. They will easily cause our wounds to bleed afresh, as they have a secret intelligence with the bottom of our hearts, where there is a soft and insinuating counsellor always ready to blind and betray us.

XXII. The holy Scripture advises us to judge of a man by his friends.* And indeed, how can he who loves God, and desires no longer to love any thing but through him, choose for his bosom friends, those who neither love nor know God, and who regard such an affection as a contemptible weakness? Can a heart full of God, and that is sensible of its own weakness, can it ever be at rest among those whose sentiments never agree with it, and with whom it is in continual danger of losing all its treasure? The taste of such people, and the taste that faith inspires, are absolutely incompatible.

XXIII. I am very sensible there are worldly attachments, which neither can nor ought be broken. There are friends to whom we are bound by an esteem for their natural good qualities, by

* Eccles. xiii. 20.

gratitude, by the attachment of a sincere friendship, and lastly, by the laws of decency and necessary intercourse. To withdraw entirely our confidence and familiarity from such persons, would wound them to the heart. But then without breaking with them, or avowing any coolness, there are gentle and imperceptible means of lessening our intercourse with them. We may distinguish them from common acquaintances, converse with them in private, and open our hearts to them on certain subjects, where probity and friendship are sufficient to enable them to give us good advice; and where our sentiments may agree, though perhaps the very same judgment in us, may proceed from motives infinitely more pure and elevated than any they are actuated by. Finally, we may continue to serve them with all the assiduity of the most cordial friendship, without giving up our hearts to them.

XXIV. Nothing can be more dangerous than the neglect of such percaution; and if we do not in the beginning exert ourselves courageously to render our piety free and independant of such irreligious friends, it is a piety that threatens approaching ruin. If a man who is beset with such friends, is naturally weak, and his passions easily inflamed, it is certain these friends, be they ever so sincere, will draw him back from his devotion. I will suppose them, if you please, virtuous, honest, full of fidelity, and every thing that

constitutes friendship, and perfect in the eyes of the world: yet all this avails not, nor will it prevent their corrupting him. The more amiable they are, the more they are to be dreaded. As for those who have not these amiable qualities, they must immediately be given up; and we should esteem ourselves most happy that a sacrifice which ought to cost so little, can be available towards a security so momentous, as that of everlasting life.

XXV. Besides this care with regard to our companions, we must carefully observe some hours to converse with God alone, in solitude and prayer. Those who are in great employments, have so many indispensible duties to attend, that they have little time left for this holy intercourse with God, unless they are very careful in the management of their hours: so little, that if they have any inclination for amusement, they will with difficulty observe the appointed hours for the service of either God or their neighbour.

We must then steadily adhere to some rule. The severity of observing it may appear excessive; but without this regularity, all will fall into confusion; we shall become dissipated, relaxed, lose our strength, and become insensibly more and more alienated from God; nor shall we perceive this wandering of our hearts, until we have strayed

so far, that we have neither hope nor courage sufficient to enable us to return.

Let us pray then, let us pray. Prayer is our only safety.* "Blessed be God, who hath not cast out my prayer, nor turned his mercy from me." To be faithful in prayer, we must be faithful in regulating all the occupations of the day with an inflexible resolution.

CHAP. V.

On the conformity of our lives, to that of Jesus Christ.

We must imitate Jesus: that is, live as he lived, think as he thought, and conform ourselves to his image, which is the seal of our sanctification.

How different is our conduct? we who are actual nothings, exalt ourselves, and imagine ourselves to be somewhat, while the Almighty becomes a worm, and no man. O Lord, I will with thee make myself of no reputation, and sacrifice to thee all the pride and vanity that has hitherto possessed me. Assist this inclination, O my God; remove far from me all occasion of falling;† *O turn away mine eyes, lest they behold vanity;*

* Psal. lxvi. 20. † Psal. cxix. 37.

that I may see nothing but thee, and myself in thy presence: it is then that I shall know what I am, and what thou art.

Jesus Christ, born in a stable, is constrained to fly into Egypt, passes thirty years of his life in the shop of a mean artificer, suffers hunger, thirst and weariness; is poor, despised and rejected, he preaches that the kingdom of heaven is come, but no one listens to him; the great and learned persecute him, they take him and make him undergo the most cruel torments, they treat him as a slave, crucify him between two thieves, and prefer a murderer before him. This is the life that Jesus Christ has chosen, and yet we dread every kind of humiliation, the least slight is insupportable to us.

Let us compare our lives with that of Jesus Christ; let us remember that he is the master, and we the servants, that he is the Almighty, and we nothing but weakness, yet he abases himself, and we exalt ourselves. Let us hereafter so frequently contemplate our own wretchedness as not to despise any body but ourselves. Can we justly be provoked at others, and observe their faults, while we are so full of them ourselves? Let us begin to walk in the path Jesus Christ has marked out for us, since it is he alone who can conduct us to himself.

And how can we expect to find Jesus Christ, if we do not seek him in such states as he chose in this mortal life; that is to say, in solitude, in silence, in poverty, in misery, in persecutions and troubles, in the cross, and all sorts of humiliations? The saints find him in heaven in the brightness of his glory, and in unspeakable pleasure; but it is after they have lived with him on earth in reproaches, pains and humiliations. To be a Christian, is to be an imitator of Jesus Christ. And in what can we imitate him but his humiliations? nothing else can unite us to him. As almighty, we ought to adore him; as just, we ought to fear him; as good and merciful, we ought to love him with all our strength; as humble, submissive, despised and mortified, we ought to imitate him.

Let us not pretend to do this through our own strength; all that is in us resists it; but let us comfort ourselves with this reflection, that God is with us. Jesus Christ was content to feel all our weaknesses; he is a compassionate high priest, who was content to be tempted in all points like as we are; let us then be strong in him, who voluntarily became weak that we might be strong; let us enrich ourselves through his poverty, and say with confidence, "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me."*

* Phil. iv. 13.

O Jesus, I would follow thee in the path which thou hast trod, but I can do so only through thy grace. O abject and humble Saviour, give me the true science of a Christian, and a contempt for myself; and teach me that lesson so incomprehensible to human wisdom, which is to die to myself, by that detachment which produces true humility.

Let us then in earnest apply ourselves to this business, that our hard rebellious hearts may be converted into the heart of Jesus Christ. Let us approach the sacred heart of Jesus, that it may animate ours, and destroy all the opposition it meets with. O divine Jesus, who for the love of me hath suffered so many reproaches and humiliations, so powerfully impress in my heart the esteem and love of thee, that I may truly desire to be a partaker of thy submissive life.

CHAP. VI.

A Prayer to give ourselves up entirely to God in solitude.

O God, I would willingly resign myself entirely to thee: strengthen I beseech thee, this feeble will that sighs after thee; I stretch forth my hands to thee, do thou take hold of me; if I lack sufficient strength, attract me, I beseech thee, by

the sweetness of thy odours, draw me after thee by the chains of thy love. Lord, to whom shall I belong, if not to thee? O how vile a slavery is it to be devoted to ourselves and to our passions! O how great is the liberty of the children of God! Alas, thou art not known. Happy is he who has found thee, and no longer seeks thee where thou art not: thrice happy he, who so trusts in God as to depend on him alone.

But whence comes it, O my divine Spouse, that we have not courage to break our sensual chains? are these transitory vanities of more value than thou, and thy eternal truth? shall we be afraid to resign ourselves to thee? O egregious folly! this would be dreading to quit Egypt for the promised land; it would be murmuring in the desert, and loathing the manna, upon the remembrance of the flesh pots of Egypt.

It is not I that give to thee, it is thou, my God, that givest all to me. I will not hesitate then to give thee, in return, my heart. O how great is the blessedness of being so retired with thee, as to hear and see nothing that is unprofitable and vain, but to listen perpetually to thee! O infinite wisdom! is not thy voice to be preferred to that of vain man? thou wilt speak to me, O God of love, thou wilt instruct me, and enable me to fly all vanity and falsehood; thou wilt feed me with thyself, and restrain in me all vain curiosity. Lord,

when I meditate upon thy yoke, it appears too easy; and is this then the cross which I am to carry, by following thee all the days of my life? hast thou no cup more bitter, that I may drink it even to the dregs? is this peaceful retreat under an holy discipline, and among so many good examples, the severe penance which my sins have merited? O blessed Love, all thy proceedings are the works of love; thou forbearest to strike, in pity to my weakness; shall I then fear to approach thee? the crosses the world lays on its children should indeed affright; what blindness is it not to fear them?

O infinite misery, which thy mercy alone can exceed! the less I have of light and courage, the more I stand in need of thy compassion. O my God, I have made myself unworthy of thee, but I may yet become a miracle of thy grace. Give me all that I want, and then there will be nothing in me, but what will magnify thy gracious favours.

CHAP. VII.

On Meditation.

It is certain, that when we have laid the solid foundations of an entire conversion of the heart, a rigid penitence, and a serious minute meditation on all the truths of Christianity that respect our practice; we become by degrees to be so accustomed to all these truths, that in the end we behold them in a simple and steady view, and have no occasion to begin again, to convince ourselves of the reality of each in particular. Then a sense of these united truths produce a sensibility of God, so pure and intimate, that we find all in him. It is not the understanding that now enquires and reasons, it is the will that loves, and plunges itself into the infinite source of good.

But this is not yet your state. You must first walk a long time in the way of sinners who are beginning to seek God: meditation, such as is usually practised, is your portion, and happy are you that God has deigned to initiate you into it.

Walk then in the spirit of Abraham, without knowing whither you go: be content with your daily bread, and remember that in the wilderness, the manna they gathered for more than one day presently corrupted; so true is it, that the children of God should be wholly intent upon rightly em-

ploying their present graces, without desiring to anticipate the designs of his providence upon them.

Let meditation be therefore now your employment, meditate on all the mysteries of Christianity, and the truths of the gospel, which you have so long in ignorance rejected. When God shall have thoroughly effaced in you the impressions made by the maxims of the world, and that the spirit of Jesus Christ shall have freed you from all your ancient prejudices; you must then attend to the attraction of grace, and follow it step by step, without anticipating it; but remain peacefully in the bosom of your God, as an infant in the arms of its mother reposes on her breast: be content with reflecting on the subject of your meditation in a simple and easy manner; resign yourself entirely to the truth that affects you, when you perceive that it nourishes your heart. Avoid all such efforts as heat the brain, and frequently inspire a dangerous vivacity of the imagination, rather than that real piety which consists in a will absolutely devoted to God. Shun also all subtile reflections, and confine yourself to natural and easy considerations; let them dwell upon your mind, and frequently re-consider them: for those who pass lightly from one truth to another, only nourish their curiosity and uneasiness, and by a multiplicity of views dissipate their spirit.

You should give each truth time to strike its roots deep into your heart; the essential point is to love. Nothing causes so great indigestion as eating much, and in haste. Digest then each truth at your leisure, if you would draw good nourishment from it; but let there be no uneasy returns to self.—Remember that your prayer can be only so far good, as it is free from restraint and uneasiness, and not the effect of an overheated imagination.

I know very well, that sundry distractions are inevitable: but you must bear them patiently, and whenever you perceive the wanderings of your imagination, pay no regard to them, but turn your attention to the subject of your meditation. Thus these involuntary distractions can do you no injury; and the patience with which you courageously eudure them, will advance you more than the most enlightened prayer, which might afford you much more delight. The true way of vanquishing distractions, is neither in anger or vexation to attack them directly; nor to be discouraged either at their continuance or number.

However there is no doubt but you ought to be calmly engaged in the subject of your meditation: the whole truth is, that as far as in you lies, you should make this exercise as holy as possible, to effect which the following is the best method.

Do not load yourself with a multiplicity of different reflections on each subject; but dwell as long on each as it affords you any nourishment. By degrees you will accustom yourself to regard these truths steadfastly, without flying from one to another. This steady and constant view of each truth, will cause them to sink the deeper into your heart. You will acquire an habit of dwelling by choice, upon your subject, whereas the generality of people consider these truths of religion, only in a transitory manner. This will be the true foundation of all that God perhaps designs in the sequel to transact in you; he will by this means quench that activity of spirit, which is always desirous rather of discovering novelties, than of sinking deeper into those truths it is already acquainted with. Nevertheless, we must not constrain ourselves to dwell on any truth, longer than we can derive nourishment from it: all I require is, that so long as it does, you should adhere to it.

With regard to the affections, always keep to those which the view of your subject inspires you with, and gently resign yourself to them: but do not exert too many efforts, for they will only spend your strength, heat your brain, and even dry you up, and by employing you too much in your own activity, give you a dangerous confidence in your diligence, cause you to be too much affected with yourself, and lastly, will attach you to sensible comforts, and by

that means lay the foundation of great mistakes, in those seasons when your affections become languid. Be content therefore to follow simply, and without too much reflection, the affectionate sentiments with which God will inspire you, from the consideration of your subject, or of some other truth. As to the concerns of a more elevated state, think not of them: there is a time for all things, and your business is not to anticipate it.

It is one of the greatest rules in the spiritual life to confine our attention to the present moment, without looking any farther. You know the Israelites in the wilderness followed the pillar of a cloud or fire, without knowing where they were to be conducted to: they could gather manna only for one day, the overplus corrupted. There is therefore no doubt but we ought to march on hastily, without thinking of any thing but laying the foundation of the building, and digging it deep by an entire renunciation of ourselves, and an unreserved resignation to the commands of God. After this, God will raise, on this foundation, such a building as pleases him best: your part is to deliver yourself up implicitly to his direction. O how noble is this procedure of faith, this imitation of the conduct of Abraham, who went out not knowing whither he went, and how certainly does it draw down heavenly benedictions upon us.

In this way God will be your guide, and will

himself travel with you, as he did heretofore with the Israelites, to lead them, step by step, through the wilderness to the land of promise. Happy will you be if you suffer God to take possession of you, and to do in you what he pleases, not according to your inclinations, but his designs.

CHAP. VIII.

On Mortification.

God calls us to a daily and hourly exercise of mortification: but nothing can be more false than this maxim, that we should always choose the most severe. According to this rule, we should soon ruin our health, our reputation, our business, our intercourse with friends and relations, and all those good works which Providence assigns us to perform. I think it is unquestionable, that we ought to shun such things as we have experienced to be prejudicial to our health, as particular kinds of food and such like. This consideration of our health may, without doubt, induce us to retrench some mortifications, but can never require us to pamper our bodies, nor can it make the use of dainties necessary; on the contrary, health is to be obtained by sobriety, and, consequently, many instances of mortification are necessary to it.

Our infirmities and a regimen adapted to them, are both great penances. When we transgress

the prescribed regimen, it is not owing to a contempt of pain or disregard of life; but solely to an effeminate spirit, an incapacity to resist pleasure, and an impatience of restraint: and perhaps it is a very considerable one to avoid every thing that is prejudicial to our health. But God regulates all this in the heart he once possesses: He accustoms it gently to the prescribed rule, deprives the will of a certain inflexibility, and removes a dangerous confidence in our own judgment; he blunts the edge of the desires, cools the passions, detaches the man not only from outward objects, but even from himself, and renders him gentle, amiable, simple, lowly in his own eyes, and ready to believe or disbelieve, will or not will, according to his good pleasure. Let this be our state, as it is the will of God, and let us not resist him. That mortification that comes from the hand of God, is more profitable for us than those sensible fervours in prayer, which are according to our own taste and inclination.

With regard to austerities, we must have respect to our attraction, our state in grace, our necessities, and particular constitution. Very frequently those mortifications which consist in a constant resignation to the strokes of Providence, are more advantageous to us, than the greatest artificial austerities which render us more singular, and tempt us to a vain complacency in ourselves. He who constantly accepts every thing that

happens in the order of Providence, and seeks nothing but what it gives, will find that every day will make him a partaker of the cross of Christ: these crosses are as truly the effect of Providence, as any other things the most essential to our life; they are our daily bread, which God never suffers us to want, and are frequently the purest mortifications zealous souls can suffer, as they prevent their mortifying themselves according to their own choice, and call them to a perpetual state of such mortification as is suitable to the designs of God.

When we are not resigned to the humiliations of Providence, there is great reason to fear that there is too much of illusion in those austerities which our fervour inclines us to seek; this fervour often is deceitful, and I believe it is expedient to try our souls by their fidelity to daily and providential crosses.

When a person is equally ready, either to practise austerities or lay them aside, we may then advise him to decline them, or excite him to pursue them, according to the necessity there is of his taking care of himself, but always so as to consider with tenderness, his body and spirit: I say his spirit: for the spirit often tastes a sweet peace and delight in virtue, which it would be faulty to disturb by too severe a conduct: we must leave him in the sweet enjoyment of this felicity; restraint and compulsion enters not into the kingdom of heaven, where all is peace, joy, and love.

CHAP. IX.

On self-renunciation.

If you would rightly understand what it is to renounce yourself, you need only reflect on the difficulty you were sensible of, and which you very naturally acknowledged when I said, you must never esteem as any thing this *me*, which is so dear to us. To renounce ourselves, is to count ourselves as nothing; and whoever feels the difficulty of this, already knows in what this renunciation consists, which is a rebellion against all the strongest emotions of nature. Since you have felt the blow, you must be sensible of the wound in your heart, and should now leave the business to the Almighty, who knows full well how to tear you from yourself.

The foundation of all our malady, is a blind self-love, which becomes a species of idolatry. All that we love outwardly, we love only for ourselves. We must not be deceived by those generous friendships in which we appear to forget ourselves, and think only of the interests of those to whom we are attached. When in the commerce of friendship we have no sordid interests in view, we pursue others which are more latent, more delicate, and more laudable in the opinion of the world; but these are so much the more dangerous

and capable of corrupting us, as they afford a finer nourishment to self-love.

What we seek then in those attachments, which appear so generous and disinterested, both to ourselves and others, is the pleasure of loving without any interested consideration, and by this elevation of sentiment, raising ourselves in our own eyes, above those mean contracted spirits who are only attached by mercenary motives. Besides this inward testimony which we are in quest of to flatter our pride, we desire the glory of being esteemed in the world, as generous and disinterested; we seek to be loved by our friends, although we should not desire to be served by them; we hope they will be pleased by our disinterested services, and thus we still return to that self, which we think we have abandoned: for what is more delightful and flattering to a refined self-love, than to see itself applauded so as not to be accounted self-love?

A man who appears to others every thing that is praise-worthy, yet is as nothing in his own eyes, who is the delight of all good men, and seems to forget himself; such a man is so exalted a character, this forgetfulness of self is so truly great, that even self-love desires to imitate it, and finds that there is no glory equal to that of not appearing to seek any. This command of our passions and detachment from self, which ought, if it were

real and effectual, to be the death of nature, becomes the most subtile and imperceptible food of pride, which despises all vulgar means of self-exaltation, and would trample under foot all those gross vanities, which elevate other men.

But it is easy to unmask this modest pride, although on no hand it appears pride, as it has renounced all that flatters this vice in others. If when it is condemned, it suffers it impatiently; if when those it loves and obliges, do not repay it with friendship, esteem and confidence, it is touched to the quick, and you may by these marks plainly see it is not disinterested, though it takes all possible means to appear so; indeed it does not require payment in such gross coin as others do; it asks not fulsome praises, nor wealth, nor those advantages of fortune which consist in great expences and outward dignities; nevertheless, it is not content without payment of another kind; it is greedy of esteem of good men, would love in order to be beloved, and that its disinterestedness might excite the admiration of others; but in reality it only seems to forget itself, the better to attract the world.

I do not mean by this, that it openly makes these reflections; it does not say, I desire to deceive the world, that it may admire me for a disinterestedness which I have not: No, it dare not say this in direct terms, but deceives itself while it imposes on others,

and admires itself with as much complacency as a beautiful woman contemplates her features in a glass; it is sensibly pleased with regarding itself as more sincere and disinterested than other men; the illusion it would cast before others, recoils upon itself; it does not sacrifice itself but for the sake of being disinterested, which is what is most flattering to it.

Let us enter ever so little into ourselves to discover what grieves and what flatters us, we shall easily perceive that pride, according to its grossness or delicacy, has different tastes.

But pride, be it ever so refined, is still pride; and that which appears the most rational, is in fact the most diabolical; for while it esteems itself, it despises others, and pities such as are content with the foolish vanities of life; it is sensible of the vanity of grandeur and the most exalted stations, and has no patience with those who are intoxicated with the gifts of fortune; it would by its moderation be above even fortune itself, and thus elevate itself to an unusual pitch of greatness, and lay at its feet all the false glory of the human species: it is a desire similar to that of Lucifer's to be equal to the Highest; we would assume to ourselves a kind of divinity, by being superior to the passions and interests of men, and so blind are we as not to perceive that it is a deceitful pride, which thus raises us in our own ideas above other mortals.

Let us then conclude, that the love of God alone can detach us from ourselves. If the powerful hand of God did not support us, we should not know where to set our foot to take one step out of ourselves.

There is no medium, all our actions and designs must tend either to God or ourselves. If self is the end of all our proeeedings, we have in truth no other God but that *me,* of which I have so often spoke to you; if on the contrary they tend to God, we are as we ought to be; and then, regarding ourselves, as we would another of his creatures, without self-interested reflections, and with a view only to fulfil his will, we enter into that self-renunciation you wished to comprehend.

Again, nothing is a more effectual bar to your receiving this grace of self-renunciation, than a philosophical pride and self-love, disguised under the mask of a worldly generosity, which you should always be suspicious of, on account of your natural and constitutional bias to it. The more we have by nature of candour, disinterestedness, complacency in virtue, delicacy of sentiment, a taste for probity and disinterested friendship, the more we ought to strive to get loose from self, and fear the being delighted with those natural gifts.

The reason why no creature can draw us out of ourselves, is that there is no person whose merit

entitles him to be preferred by us to ourselves. There is not any one who has either a right to draw us thus away from ourselves, or the perfection necessary to attach us to him, without any regard to self, or lastly, the power to satisfy our hearts in this attachment. Hence it comes to pass, that we love nothing out of ourselves, but for ourselves; if we are gross and brutal, our choice is the effect of our gross and brutal passions; or else if we have delicacy enough not to be content with the pleasures that such can afford, it is the effect of that taste for glory, that our pride renders us susceptible of.

But there are two things performed by God, which he alone can do: the first is, to shew himself to us with all his rights as our Creator, and with all the charms of his goodness. We are then sensible that we made not ourselves; that we were created for his glory, whose good pleasure it was to create us: that he is too excellent not to be the end of all created beings, and that all our perfection and happiness is to lose ourselves in him.

This is what no creature, be it ever so glorious, can make us feel with regard to it. Far from finding in it that infinity which fills and transports us in God, we only find in the creature a void, an incapacity to fill our hearts, and an imperfection which occasions us always to return to ourselves.

The second miracle which God performs is, after having enlightened our understandings, to move our hearts as he pleases. He does not content himself with shewing us that he is infinitely lovely, but he causes himself to be beloved by us, by infusing the grace of his love into our hearts, and thus executes in us what he makes us sensible is our duty.

You will say, perhaps, that you would be glad to know in a more particular manner, what this self-renunciation is; I will then endeavour to satisfy you.

We are easily convinced that it is our duty to renounce all criminal pleasures, unjust acquisitions, and evident vanities, because the renunciation of them consists in an absolute contempt and total rejection of them, and a condemnation of all enjoyment in them: but it is not so easy to see the necessity of renouncing wealth which is lawfully acquired, the sweets of an innocent and reputable life, and finally the honours which are the consequence of a good reputation, and a virtue superior to envy.

What makes it very difficult for us to understand that we should renounce these things is, that we ought not absolutely to reject them, but should use them soberly, suitable to that state in which Providence has placed us.

The comforts of a calm and peaceful life, are necessary to support us under the embarrassments annexed to every state; with regard to honours, we should have respect to decency, and, to supply our necessities, should preserve the wealth we possess: how then, you will say, do we renounce those things, while we employ our care to preserve them? The true way is, dispassionately to do all we can to preserve them, that we may make a sober use of them, without setting our affections on them.

I say a sober use, because when we are not passionately attached to any thing, so as to seek in the enjoyment of it our own satisfaction, we only take so much of it as is unavoidable, like a discreet and faithful steward, who takes no more of his master's goods than is absolutely necessary for his real occasions.

Thus the way to renounce things in themselves evil, is to reject them with horror; but the way to renounce good things, is to use them with moderation, as occasion requires, always studying to retrench those imaginary wants, with which our avaricious nature would pamper itself.

Observe that we must not only renounce evil, but good things, for Jesus Christ has said without

restriction: "whosoever forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."*

Every Christian then is obliged to renounce all that he possesses, even the most innocent things, because they cease to be so, the moment he refuses to part with them.

We must even renounce those things which we are obliged carefully to preserve; such as the estates of our families, or our own reputation, which are things we must not yield up our hearts to, but preserve them only to make a sober and moderate use of them; lastly, we must cheerfully resign them whenever Providence deprives us of them.

We must likewise renounce those that are most dear to us, and whom we are in duty bound to love; this renunciation consists in loving them only for God, enjoying the consolation of their friendship occasionally, and with sobriety, being ready to part with them when it is the will of God, and never seeking in them the true repose of the heart. This is the chastity of true Christian friendship, which seeks the heavenly spouse in a mortal and terrestrial friend. In this manner we use the creatures and the world "as if we used them not,"† according to St. Paul's expression: we desire not

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* Luke xiv. 33. † 1. Cor. vii. 31.

to enjoy, we only use what God bestows, and love them so far as it is his will we should; restraining our hearts in the use of them, only using them for necessity, and reserving our affections for a more proper object.

Is it in this sense that Jesus Christ would have us renounce father, mother, brethren, sisters and friends, and that he came to send a sword into the midst of families.

God is a jealous God; if at the bottom of our heart we are attached to any creature, our heart is no longer worthy of him, and is rejected by him as a wife, who suffers a stranger to partake of the affection she owes her husband.

After having renounced all outward things, then comes the last sacrifice, which is that of all within us, and that is in reality renouncing ourselves.

The renunciation of our bodies is dreadful to the generality of delicate and worldly people. These effeminate persons know nothing more of themselves, as I may say, than their bodies, which they flatter and adorn with so much care: and frequently those who are not captivated by the graces of their persons, preserve such a love for the bodily life as to make them shameful cowards, and ready to tremble at the name of death.

Perhaps your natural courage raises you above those fears; methinks I hear you say, I would not indulge my body, nor would I hesitate a moment to consent to its dissolution, if it was the will of God to strike it, and reduce it to ashes.

But although you do thus despise your body, there still remain many obstacles to the renunciation of your spirit. The more we contemn this earthly body through our natural strength of mind, the greater will be our temptation to overvalue those internal qualities which enable us to despise it.

We are as much captivated with our understanding, our wisdom, and our virtue, as a girl of this world is with her beauty; we regard them with the same complacency; we delight in being thought wise, temperate, and free from the intoxications that disorder others; and by this means we become intoxicated with the vanity of not appearing to be so in prosperity, and of renouncing by a courageous moderation all that the world most prizes; but then we are desirous of enjoying this very moderation.

O how dangerous is this state! how subtile is its poison! how certainly would you offend God, should you resign your heart to this refined self-love! You must then renounce all enjoyment of, and all natural complacency in, your own wisdom and virtue.

Remember that the more pure and excellent the gifts of God are, the more jealous is he of them.

He shewed mercy to the first man that sinned, but condemned the rebellious angel. Neither the angel nor the man had sinned but through the love of themselves; and as the perfection of the angel was such that he was tempted to consider himself as a kind of divinity, God punished his infidelity more severely than he did that of man. Let us then conclude, that God is more jealous of his most excellent gifts than of those which are most common. He desires we should be attached to him alone, and not to his gifts, be they ever so pure, only so far as is according to his design, to unite us the more easily and intimately to himself. Whoever regards with complacency, and as his own property, the graces he has received from God, converts them into poison.

Beware then of appropriating to yourself, not only outward things, as your talents, and the favour you stand in with men, but also the internal gifts of God. The goodness of your will is not less the free gift of God, than your being and life, which come from him; live then as a debtor; all that is in you, and all that you are, is but a loan from God; use it according to the intention of the lender; and never consider it as at your own disposal, and as a possession that belongs to you.

It is this spirit which appropriates nothing to itself, and this simplicity with regard to ourselves to follow the motions of God, which is all the real property of the creature, and in which consists the solid renunciation of ourselves.

You will now probably ask me, what is the particular fruit of this renunciation? I answer, that when this desire is in the bottom of the heart, God himself leads us as it were by the hand, and exercises this renunciation in the daily occurrences of life.

It is not by painful reflections and continual contentions that we renounce ourselves; but by abstaining from all self-seeking, and being willing to be as God pleases, that we lose ourselves in him.

CHAP. X.

On detachment from self.

When I said that he who is not voluntarily attached to himself, is truly detached, I intended by saying so, to prevent or cure the scruples that some people entertain with respect to the remaining regards of self-love. Those souls who are faithful in the practice of self-renunciation, are frequently tormented by self-interested views in their actions and conversation. They fear they do not in reality resist a vain complacency, in a view to

glory, a taste for what is most easy and convenient, and a self-seeking in the consolations of virtue. All this alarms a tender conscience, and it is perpetually accusing itself for it. To encourage such a soul, it is proper to inform it, that the reality of all vice and virtue lies in the will; so that when these regards are involuntary, they prevent not the sincerity of our detachment.

But you will perhaps say, when we are really detached from ourselves, can we have these involuntary interested views, which views may be deemed an action of our will? I answer, that a soul really detached from self and united to God, seldom seeks its own interest deliberately and by design. But yet to set it at liberty, and to prevent its being continually on the rack, it is necessary that it should be told once for all, that all involuntary returns to self and our own interests do not offend God, any more than those other temptations to which we do not yield our consent. Besides, it should be considered that those who are sincerely pious, but not perfectly mortified with regard to the pleasures of the world, or what friendship affords, indulge in some degree their self-seeking in those things. They do not indeed run on headlong in such pursuits, but suffer themselves to be drawn into them occasionally. These things attach us to self, and an evident proof that they do so is, that when any of these supports of nature are shaken, we are undone.

If any accident disturbs the serenity of our lives, or threatens our reputation, or separates those from us whose friendship we value, we then feel so lively a regret, as plainly proves how much alive and sensible self-love is still within us.

We remain then imperceptibly attached to ourselves, and nothing but accidental misfortunes discover to us the true state of our hearts. It is only by God's taking from us that to which we are attached, or seeming to do so, that we lose this unjust property in that which we have before sacrificed to him.

That which we call moderation in the use of God's blessings, is not so certain a proof of our detachment, as resignation when deprived of them. There is nothing but this deprivation, and which comes from the hand of God, that truly detaches us.

In this state of sincere though imperfect piety, we are liable to an infinite number of secret returns to self. There is a time when our views of things are indistinct, and that God permits his interior light to go no further than to direct us in our sacrifice: Jesus Christ then says to us inwardly, what he said formerly to the apostles, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now."*

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* Luke xxii. 33.

We see in ourselves many real good intentions, but we should be terrified did we perceive to how many things we are still attached. It is not indeed wilfully and premeditatedly that we have these attachments; we say not in ourselves, I have them, and I desire to have them: but notwithstanding we really have them, and are sometimes afraid of digging too deep lest we should discover them, we are sensible of our weakness, and dare not proceed. Sometimes, also, we are willing to examine ourselves to the bottom, that we may sacrifice all to God; but this is only a rash and indiscreet fit of zeal, like that of St. Peter's, when he said, "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death," and afterwards was terrified by the question of a servant maid. We seek to discover all our defects; and God directs us in this enquiry. He refuses us a light too strong for our state of grace; he suffers us not to perceive in our heart that which it is not yet the season to deprive us of. It is a wonderful procedure of the divine goodness, never to solicit us inwardly to forsake aught that we have hitherto loved and possessed, without suitably enlightening us; and that his light never directs us to make any sacrifice which he does not give us strength to perform. We are, with regard to this sacrifice, as the apostles were to the prediction of their Lord's death; they comprehended nothing of it, and their eyes were blinded. The most enlightened souls, and those that are most watchful against their defects, are notwithstanding

frequently in this state of darkness, with regard to certain detachments, which God reserves for a more advanced state of faith and mortification We must not desire to anticipate the time, and we may rest in peace, provided we are faithful to what we know. Whatever else is necessary for us, God will reveal in his own time.

It is in mercy that God thus conceals from us, such things as we are not yet able to bear. We have a certain impatient zeal for our own perfection, which is desirous of immediately seeing and sacrificing all: but an humble confidence while under the hand of God, and calmly to support without flattering ourselves in this state of darkness and dependence, is infinitely more useful towards accomplishing the death of self, than all our uneasy efforts to advance our own perfection.

Let us then be content to follow the light of the present moment, without looking further. It is our daily bread, which God gives us only for one day; it is like the manna in the wilderness; and he that would gather a double portion, and make provision for the ensuing day, grossly deceives himself. It will corrupt in his hands, and he will have no more of it to feed on than he who gathers only for one day.

It is this child-like dependance on God, to which he would fain bend our spirits. He dispenses

his internal light, as a prudent mother assigns to her daughter the task she is to perform, and as soon as it is finished allots her another.

Have you finished the task that God has set you? in that instant he will find you a new employment, for he never leaves the soul idle without the means of advancing it in detachment. If on the contrary, you have not finished your first work, he will conceal from you what is to follow. A man who travels in an extensive flat country, sees nothing beyond a little eminence which terminates his horizon, but when he arrives at that eminence, he discovers immediately a new extent of country as great as the first. It is thus in the way of renunciation. We believe that at the first sight we see all, and that we are not attached to self, or any thing else; we would rather die than hesitate to make a perfect sacrifice to God.

But in our daily progress, God continually shews us a new extent of country, and we discover in our hearts a thousand things that we could have sworn were not there. He shews them to us, in order to drive them out. Every one has in the bottom of their heart a mass of corruption, which if God shewed us all the venom and horror of, would overwhelm us with confusion. Self-love would render it an insupportable torment. I do not speak here of those who have their hearts gangrened by the most enormous vices, but of

such as appear upright and pure; there is to be found, even in them, a foolish vanity which dares not shew itself, but lurks abashed in the most inward recesses of the heart. We should see self-complacencies, elevations of pride, delicate subterfuges of self-love, and a thousand other inward imperfections which are as real as they are inexplicable; but we only see them as God begins to extirpate them. Behold, he will say to us inwardly, this is the corruption that lay hidden in the deep abyss of thine heart; after this dost thou glory in, or expect aught from thyself?

Let us then suffer God to act, and content ourselves with being faithful to the light of the present moment; it brings with it all that is necessary to prepare us for the light of the next: and this concatenation of graces, when linked as the rings of a chain, prepares us insensibly for those sacrifices of which we have not as yet the most distant view. This death to self and all that we love, which is as yet but indefinite and superficial in our will, after having touched the surface, will shoot deep roots so as to reach the very bottom of the will. It will penetrate even to the centre, and leave nothing to the creature, but will extirpate in it, without exception, all that is not God.

In the mean time, till you are convinced of it by your own experience, be persuaded on the word of another, that this detachment from self and all

that is dear to us, far from extinguishing in our hearts friendships that are really good, produces on the contrary, a friendship in God, not only pure and solid, but warm, faithful and affectionate, replete with a sweet sympathy, and that we find in it all those delights of friendship, which even nature requires for its consolation.

CHAP. XI.

On the violence a Christian must continually offer to himself.

To whom do you think St. Paul speaks when he says "We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ?"* It is to you, it is to me, and not to those who are utterly destitute of shame and the knowledge of God; yes, it is to us, who think to work out our salvation, and yet escape the folly of the cross, and to appear wise in the eyes of the world; it is to us who are not terrified at the sight of our own weakness. Where St. Paul found himself weak, we find ourselves strong; and must allow, that notwithstanding our good intentions, our lives are almost in direct opposition to that of the great Apostle. This cannot appear to be a good state; let us reflect on it, and after having

* Cor. iv. 10.

thoroughly examined ourselves, let us consider wherein we differ from the true servants of God.

Let us follow Jesus Christ, by being followers of St. Paul, who* proposes himself as a model after the divine original: behold our complacency for the world and ourselves, how we indulge our passions, our senses, and yield to our spiritual languor. The practice of virtue does not consist in words, they can never suffice to attain the kingdom of God; it is to be attained only by strength and courage, and a perpetual violence which we must offer to ourselves; a violence when the torrent of the world is to be resisted, which prevents our doing good, after having so frequently been the occasion of our doing evil; a violence, when we are in part to renounce what is necessary, that we may not be deceived, in too readily imagining that we have relinquished what is superfluous; a violence, when we are to mortify our spirits, not thinking we have done sufficient when we have mortified our bodies; a violence, for augmenting the hours of prayer, reading and retirement; a violence, for being perfectly contented in whatever state we are, without desiring more conveniencies, more honour, more health, or any other company, not even that of good people; lastly, a violence, to arrive at that degree of indifference which is absolutely necessary for a Christian, who has no will but that of

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* 1. Cor. xi. 1.

his Creator, to whom he leaves the success of all his affairs, though he employs himself in them; who acts suitably to his condition, but does so without anxiety; who takes pleasure in looking up to God, and does not fear the being regarded by him; who hopes that the eye of God will be upon him for the correction of his faults, and who peacefully relies on his mercy, with regard to the punishment of them. Here I leave you, and here I entreat you to remain, that both you and I may each of us, amidst the distractions and tumults of this worldly life, possess our souls in peace. Great God, can we so impose on ourselves, as to imagine that there is in us to be found any conformity to the life of Jesus Christ? Alas, the more we fear to suffer, the more we stand in need of it.

CHAP. XII.

That the kingdom of God is given only to those who do his will.

Salvation is not to be attained merely by ceasing to do ill; we must also add to it the practice of that which is good. The kingdom of heaven is too great a treasure to bestowed on the timorous slave, who only abstains from evil because he is afraid to commit it. God desires to have children that should love him for his goodness, and not

slaves, who only serve him through the dread of h ispower. We must then love him, and consequently do all that true love inspires.

Many apparently well meaning people deceive themselves on this subject; but it easy to rectify their mistake, if they will but examine things candidly.

Their error proceeds from their ignorance of God and themselves. They are jealous of their liberty, and afraid of losing it by devoting themselves too much to piety; but they should consider, that "they are not their own,"* but God's, who has created them solely for himself, and ought with an absolute dominion to rule them as he pleases. They owe themselves entirely to him, without any condition or reserve. We have not, strictly speaking, a right even to give ourselves to God; for we are not our own property but his: and if we do not leave ourselves to God, as a thing that naturally belongs to him, we shall be guilty of a sacrilegious theft, which would overturn the order of nature, and violate the essential law of the creature.

We must not then reason on the law which God has prescribed us, it is our busines to receive, adore, and implicitly follow it. He who made us,

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* 1. Cor. vi. 19.

knows better than we do what is fit for us. Had we composed the gospel, we should perhaps have been tempted to soften it, in order to accommodate it to our own remissness, but God has not consulted us in writing it, but has given it to us such as it is, and left us no hope of salvation, but by fulfilling that sovereign law, which is equally binding in all conditions of life. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but that word of life or death shall not pass away;"* we cannot retrench a word, nor even the smallest letter of it. Woe to those priests that dare lessen its force, and soften it to us by their glosses! It was not they who made this law; they are only the repositaries of it.

If the gospel therefore is a severe law, they are not to draw the severity of it upon themselves. This law is as much to be feared by them as other men, and more so, because they are accountable for its being observed by others, as well as by themselves. Woe to "the blind that lead the blind, they shall both," says the Son of God, "fall into the ditch."† Woe to the ignorant, dull and flattering priest, who would enlarge the strait way. "Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction."‡

Let then the pride of man be silenced. He thinks he has a right to dispose of himself, which

* Matt. xxiv. 35. † Luke vi. 39. ‡. Matt. vii. 13.

he has not. It is his business to bear the yoke of the law, and to trust that God will give him strength proportioned to its weight. In effect he who has the sovereign dominion over his creature, and can command him to do as he pleases, does by his internal grace give the will and power to execute all that he requires.

CHAP. XIII.

Against Temptations.

I know but two things to be done with regard to temptations. The first is to be guided by our inward light, in retrenching without mercy or delay, as far as we are at liberty, all that may nourish or awaken the temptation. I say, as far as we are at liberty; because it does not always depend upon us to avoid what excites us to evil. What is incident to the state in which Providence has placed us, is not supposed to be in our own power.

The second rule is, when tempted, always to turn to God, and not disquiet ourselves by considering whether we have not already in part consented, so as to interrupt the immediate tendency of our heart to God. By examining too closely whether we have not been guilty of some infidelity, we run the risk of being again involved in

the temptation. The shortest and surest method is, to act like a child at the breast, who if it is shewn a frightful monster starts back with horror, and sinks into the bosom of its mother, that it may no longer perceive it.

The practice of the presence of God, is of all others the most sovereign remedy, it comforts, supports, and calms us; we must not be surprised even at the most shameful temptations.* "My son," says the son of Sirach, "if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation." We continue here only that we may be proved by it.

Every thing in this world is temptation. Crosses tempt us, by irritating our pride, and prosperity by flattering it. Our whole life is a continual warfare, but a warfare in which Jesus Christ fights for us.

We must march on, though temptations roar around us, as a traveller surprised by a storm wraps himself up in his cloak, and proceeds in spite of the foulness of the weather.

With regard to what is past, when we have satisfied our conscience by a sincere repentance, evidenced by the actual forsaking of our sins, we

* Eccles. xi. 1.

have nothing to do but to cast all our iniquities into the abyss of mercy. We have even in the midst of the most tormenting contrition, a certain joy in feeling that we deserve eternal misery, and that it is to the mercy of God we must owe all, without being indebted to ourselves for any thing conducive to our everlasting salvation.

When an involuntary remembrance of past miseries occurs, we should remain confounded, and as it were nothing in the presence of God, peacefully bearing in his adorable sight, all the shame and ignominy of our sins, without seeking, cherishing, or recalling the too dangerous remembrance of them.

Let us then conclude, that to do the will of God, there is in a certain sense but little for us to do. It is true, indeed, that there is a great deal to be done, because we should never reserve any thing, nor one moment resist that jealous love, which incessantly pursues us to the inward recesses of the heart, and to the smallest affections of self-love, and all those attachments of which God is not the author. But, on the other hand, it is not by a multiplicity of views and severe exercises, it is not by racking and contending with ourselves that we shall really advance. On the contrary, there is no doubt but to will nothing, and to will all things without restriction or choice, to walk cheerfully and humbly where Providence leads us, to

seek nothing, refuse nothing, to find every thing in the present moment, to let him act who does all, and to leave our wills motionless in the will of God, is of all states the most blessed. Then is the heart truly filled, when it appears emptied of all.

CHAP. XIV.

On Sorrow.

With regard to such a kind of sadness as depresses and contracts the heart, there are two rules, the observation of which seems to me of great importance. The first is, to remove this sorrow by such means as Providence has furnished us with; for example, not to burthen ourselves with laborious business, so as to sink under a load greater than we are able to bear; to spare not only the powers of the body, but likewise those of the mind, by not undertaking things wherein we depend too much upon our own strength; to set apart hours for prayer, for reading, for enlivening our spirits by pious, nay even by cheerful conversation, so as at once to recreate both our bodies minds, suitable to our necessity.

We should also have some wise and discreet person to whom we might unburden our hearts of

every thing except the secrets of another; for this is a comfort that peculiarly eases an heavy heart.

Troubles too long retained in the heart, frequently burst it; whereas if we could vent them, we should see they were not deserving of all the bitterness they caused.

Nothing draws the soul so effectually out of a certain gloominess, as simplicity and poverty of spirit, by which, at the expence of its vanity, it confesses its want of courage, seeking that light and consolation which should be found by the children of God, in their communion with each other.

The second rule is, peacefully to bear all involuntary emotions of sorrow, which we suffer notwithstanding the above-mentioned precautions.

Inward discouragements, above all other things, expedite our progress in the road of faith, provided they do not stop us, and that the slothfulness of the soul does not yield to this sorrow, which, if permitted, would conquer all its powers.

A step taken in this state, is always the step of a giant, and is more valuable than a thousand taken when the soul is in a more sweet and com-

fortable disposition. We must then, despising our cowardice, march forward, which will render this state of weakness more profitable, than that of the most heroic strength.

This sensible courage, which renders every thing easy, which does and suffers all things, is often deceitful, as it nourishes self-confidence and a certain elevation of heart. This courage, though sometimes wonderfully edifying to the world, nourishes within us a secret satisfaction and inward testimony, which is a subtile poison.

We relish our own virtue, are delighted with it, we would possess it, and are pleased with its strength.

A weak and humble soul who finds no resource in itself, who fears, is troubled, and sorrowful even unto death, like our Lord in the garden, and lastly, who cries out as he did on the cross, "my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" is vastly more purified, more despised by itself, and more dead to all the desires of self, than those brave souls who enjoy in peace the fruits of their virtue.

Happy soul, that is thus bruised by God, that he thus crushes to pieces, and whom he deprives of all strength in itself, that it may be supported only by him; who is sensible of its own poverty

and is content; who bears, besides outward crosses, this great inward one of the desponding of the heart, without which all others avail but little.

CHAP. XV.

Extracts from a chapter, on Dejection and Dissipation.

SECT. I.

There are two things which especially disquiet you: the one is to avoid a certain dissipation, the other to bear up against dejection and melancholy. As to dissipation it will never be remedied by strained reflections. Do not hope to do the work of grace by the springs and ingenuities of nature. Be content to give your will without reserve to God, and never regard any state as grievous, but accept it with resignation to the divine Providence.

If you really desire to avoid distraction, you will in fact never be distracted, and it may be truly said that your prayer will not be in vain. Whenever you perceive the distraction, you must let it fall to the ground without combating it, and calmly turn to God without any violent contention of the mind.

If the distraction is imperceptible, it is not to

be accounted a distraction of the heart. The moment you perceive it, lift your eyes towards God. The sincerity of your desire to enter into his presence, will merit the grace of more frequently attaining it; and this is, if I am not deceived, the most speedy method of making the presence of God familiar to you.

Be not troubled that the sensible presence of God often flies from you; but especially beware of desiring to retain it by reasoning and reflection.

Content yourself in the course of the day, and in the discharge of your duty, with a general and confused view of God, so that if at any time you are asked what is the disposition of your heart, it would be true to say, it aims at God, though it should then be actually attentive to some other object.

Give yourself no concern with regard to the wanderings of your imagination, which are unavoidable. We often distract ourselves by the fear of being distracted, and afterwards by the regret of having been so.

What would you think of a man, who instead of proceeding on his journey, should spend his time in foreseeing the falls he might possibly meet with, and when he did chance to fall, should turn back

to see the place in which he fell? you would say to him, go on, go on; I say the same to you; go on without stopping or looking behind you.* "Walk," says the apostle to the Thessalonians, "that ye may abound more and more." The abounding in the love of God will rectify your mistakes much more effectually, than your disquiet and uneasy returns to self.

SECT. II.

Sorrow often proceeds from our seeking God, and not finding him to our satisfaction. The desire of perceiving him is not the desire of possessing him, but is the desire of self-love to be assured that it possesses him for its gratification.

Nature, dejected and discouraged, is impatient to withdraw itself from pure faith, where it is as in the air, suspended without any support; it is desirous of perceiving its own advancement.

At the sight of its faults, its pride is provoked, and it imagines that this chagrin is a penitential sentiment.

We are through self-love, desirous of seeing ourselves perfect, and are angry that we are not

* 1. Thess. iv. 1.

so; thus we are impatient, haughty, and out of humour both with ourselves and others. Deplorable error! as if the work of God could be accomplished by our vexation, or as if we could unite ourselves to the God of peace, by departing from all internal peace.

Martha, Martha, why are you troubled about so many things for the service of Jesus Christ? one thing only is needful, which is to love him, and always remain attentive at his feet.

When we are resigned to God, all is done without our doing any thing. We suffer ourselves to be conducted with perfect confidence in him: as for what may happen, we will without reserve all that he wills, and have no desire to foresee any thing, but apply ourselves in the present moment to the accomplishment of his will.

Sufficient to each day is its evil and its good. The daily fulfilling the will of God, is the coming of his kingdom within us, and our daily bread.

We are not to look into that futurity which God conceals from us; the most perfect preparation for that futurity is to die to all self-will, that we may resign ourselves totally to the will of God.

As the manna had all tastes, so this general disposition of the heart includes all graces, and all sentiments that are most proper for every condition, in which God can hereafter place us.

SECT. III.

When we are thus ready for all things, we are as easy about the past as the future.

We suppose the worst of ourselves that is possible; but throw ourselves blindly into the arms of God, we forget and lose ourselves, and this oblivion of self is the most perfect penitence, as all conversion consists in the renouncing ourselves to be possessed by God. This oblivion is the martyrdom of self love, as we would a thousand times rather contradict and torment both our flesh and spirit, than thus forget ourselves.

When you perceive you have transgressed, be only faithful to turn yourself in simplicity to God alone. You form, I know, a thousand fine contrivances with yourself, but it is not with yourself you ought to take your measures. When you peevishly chide your own wretchedness, I see no one but yourself in your council. Wretched council, alas, where God is not!

Who will stretch forth an hand to lift you out of the mire? is it yourself? alas, it is yourself that is sunk into it! Besides, that very mire into which you are sunk, is yourself; the whole foundation of your misery is, that you cannot come out of yourself.

With regard to that natural dejection that proceeds from constitutional melancholy, as the body is the cause of it, so medicines and a regimen, are the proper cure for it.

It is true it frequently returns, but it is then involuntary: and when sent by God we should bear it peacefully, as a fever, or any other bodily disorder.

The will of the irreligious, in the midst of their pleasures, is neither free nor at ease, because they are never contented in their state; they would fain escape certain things that are not agreeable to their humour, and they seek for additional pleasures which they have not.

On the contrary, the faithful soul is restrained in nothing but accepts freely all the afflictions sent it by God. It even loves and embraces them, and would not be exempted from them, if to be so should cost only a wish, because that wish would be the wish of self, and contrary to its resignation to that Providence which it would never anticipate.

SECT. IV.

That watchfulness which Jesus Christ requires in the Gospel, is a faithful attention always to love and accomplish the will of God in the present moment, according as God discovers it to you: but does not consist in incessantly tormenting and busying ourselves about ourselves, instead of raising our eyes to God, from whence cometh our only help against ourselves.

Why, under pretence of watching, do we endeavour to discover what God would not have us see during this life? why do we lose the fruit of pure faith and inward peace? why turn from the presence of God, which he is willing always to afford us? He has not said, Be ye yourselves the constant object of your attention, but "Walk before me, and be thou perfect."*

David, full of this spirit, has said, "I have set God always before me:" and again, "Mine eyes are ever looking unto the Lord; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net."† Though his danger is in his feet, his eyes are looking upward: it is less useful to think of our danger, than the assistance of God. Besides, in God we see all; in him we see both human misery and divine goodness; one glance alone of a pure and upright heart, be

* Gen. xvii. 1. † Psalm xvi. 9. xxv. 14.

it ever so simple, sees all things in that infinite light.

O my God, provided I cease not to see thee, I shall not cease to see myself and all my wretchedness.

When outward occupations prevent me from seeing thee, I shall at least, O Lord, see thee doing all in all; with joy I shall every where behold thy work fulfilled both within and without me, and shall perpetually say with the blessed, Amen. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me."* I will seek no danger, nor enter into any engagement, unless encouraged by thee, so that I may derive strength and consolation from the reflection, that it is according to thy Providence; and even in those states where I am sustained by being in them according to thy vocation, every day, hour, or moment that is at my own disposal, will I dedicate to prayer, recollection and retirement; never will I quit this blessed state, unless called by thee to some outward function. Then in appearance shall I go out of thee, yet will thou go with me, and carry me as in thy arms.

* Psalm xxiii. 4.

CHAP. XVI.

Extracts from a chapter, How we ought to watch over ourselves.

With regard to watching over ourselves, without being too much busied in it, the following appears to me to be the best manner of practising this vigilance.

The wise and diligent traveller always watches over his steps, and has his eyes upon that part of the road which is immediately before him; he is not incessantly turning back to count his steps and examine the road he has passed. This would be losing that time in which he ought to proceed on his journey.

A soul whom God really leads by the hand, (for I speak not of those who are but learning to walk, and have as yet the true road to seek) ought indeed to watch over its way, but then it should be with a simple and tranquil vigilance, confined to the present moment, and without any uneasiness proceeding from self-love. This vigilance is a continual attention to the will of God to fulfil it every moment, and not a return to ourselves that we may be assured of our state, which God would have us ignorant of. Wherefore the Psalmist says, "Mine eyes are ever looking

unto the Lord, for he shall pluck my feet out of the net."*

Observe, that to guide his feet aright, in the way where the net is laid, instead of casting them down to the ground to examine all his steps, he lifts his eyes up unto the Lord. We can never watch better over ourselves, than when we walk with God always present before our eyes, as he directed Abraham to do. And in effect, to what should all our watchfulness tend, but to follow step by step the will of God? He who conforms himself to it in all things, truly watches over himself, and every thing is sanctified to him.

If then we could always retain the presence of God, we should always be watchful, and then our watchfulness would be simple, tranquil, and disinterested: whereas that other kind of watchfulness which is only a desire of being self-assured, is vexatious, restless and interested. It is not by our own light, but that of God, by which we ought to walk. We cannot see the holiness of God without being shocked at our smallest infidelities. We must not fail to add to recollection and the presence of God, the examination of our conscience, according to the necessity we find for it, to facilitate our contrition, and prevent our growing remiss; by this means, those examinations grow more

* Psalm xxv. 14.

and more simple, easy, and at a distance from all troublesome returns to self. We should examine ourselves, not with any interested view, but that we may the more exactly conform to the will of God.

Moreover, in this state you abandon yourself into the hands of God, and are as much at ease by knowing you are in his hands, as you would be sorry to be in your own. You desire to see nothing that he would conceal from you. You love him infinitely more than you do yourself, therefore you would, without making any conditions, sacrifice yourself to his good pleasure; you desire nothing but to love him and forget yourself. He who thus generously loses his soul, shall find it in eternal life.

CHAP. XVII.

On the inward teaching of God's Holy Spirit.

It is certain from Scripture,* that the Spirit of God dwelleth in us, that it acts there, that it there prays without ceasing, that it groans there, that it desires there, that it there asks for us what we ourselves know not how to ask for, that it impels

* Rom. viii. John xiv.

us, animates us, speaks to us in silence, suggests all truth to us, and unites us so to itself, that we become *one spirit with God.** This is what faith teaches us. This is what the doctors, the furthest removed from the inward life, cannot avoid acknowledging. Yet notwithstanding these principles, in their practice they always aim at supposing, that the outward written law, or at most a certain light, derived from Scripture and reasoning, is what inwardly enlightens us, and that afterwards our reason acts of itself from that instruction. They esteem not enough that inward teacher, which is the Holy Spirit, and which effects all in us. He is the soul of our soul: we could not form a thought or desire but through him. Alas, how great then is our blindness! We esteem ourselves as if alone in this inward sanctuary; and quite the contrary, God is more intimately there than we are ourselves.

You will perhaps say to me, what then, are we inspired? Yes, without doubt; but not as the Prophets and Apostles were. Without the actual inspiration of the Spirit of Grace, we could neither do, will, or believe any good. We are then always inspired, but we incessantly stifle this inspiration. God ceases not to speak, but the noise and hurry of things without, and our pasisons within, deafen and hinder us from attending to

* 1. Cor. vi. 17.

him. We must silence every creature, we must silence ourselves also, to hear in a profound stillness of the soul, this inexpressible voice of Christ, the bridegroom of our souls. We must be very attentive, for it is a soft and still voice, which is not to be heard but by those who listen to it alone. O how seldom does the soul keep silence enough to let God speak! The lowest whisper of our vain desires, or self-love attentive to itself, disturbs all the words of the Spirit of God. We hear plain enough that he asks for something; but we know not what he says, and are often glad not to understand it. The smallest reserve, the least regard for self, the least fear of understanding too plainly, that God asks more than we are willing to give him, disturbs this inward voice. Shall we be surprised then, if so many, even pious persons, but still full of amusements, vain desires, false wisdom and confidence in their own virtues, cannot hear it, and regard this inward voice as a fanatical chimera. Alas, what would they be at by their disdainful reasonings? To what purpose would the outward word of teachers be, and even of the Scriptures, if it were not for the inward voice of the Holy Spirit, which gives them all their efficacy? The outward word of the gospel itself, without this living efficacious word within, would be but an empty sound. It is *the letter* that alone *killeth*, and *the spirit* that alone *giveth life*.* O Word, O

* 2. Cor. iii. 6.

eternal and all-powerful Word of the Father, it is thou that speakest in the bottom of our souls. That word which proceeded out of the mouth of our Saviour during the days of his mortal life, would not have had so much virtue, nor been productive of such fruits on earth, but because it was animated by this Word of Life, which is the Word itself. This made St. Peter say, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."*

It is not then only the outward law of the gospel, which God shews us inwardly by the light of reason and faith, it is his Spirit that speaks, that moves us, that operates in us, and animates us; so that it is this Spirit, which does in us all the good we do, as it is our soul that animates our body, and regulates all its motions.

It is then true that we are continually inspired, and that we do not live the life of grace, but so far as we partake of this inward inspiration. But, O my God, few Christians are sensible of this; for there are very few, who by their voluntary dissipation, or their resistance, do not destroy it.

This inspiration ought not to persuade us that we are like the Prophets. Their inspiration was exempt from any doubt about the things that God revealed to them, or commanded them to do; it

* John vi. 69.

was an extraordinary impulse, either to discover future things, to work miracles, or to invest them with divine authority. Our inspiration is very different, it is without light, and without certainty; it confines itself to instil into us obedience, patience, sweetness, humility, and all the other virtues necessary to every Christian. It is not a divine motion to prophesy, to change the laws of nature, or to govern men in the name of God: it is a simple invitation in the bottom of the soul to obedience and resignation, suitable to the designs of the love of God. Inspiration thus limited and simple, infers no more than the universal doctrine of the whole church; it contains not in itself (if the fancy of men does not add something to it) any presumptive or illusive snare: on the contrary, it preserves us in the hands of God, under the conduct of the church, attributing every thing to grace, without destroying our liberty, and leaving nothing to pride or imagination.

These principles being laid down, it must be acknowledged that God speaks incessantly in us.* He speaks in impenitent sinners; but they being deafened by the noise of the world, and their passions, cannot hear him: his word is to them as a tale. He speaks also in penitent sinners; these feel a remorse of conscience, and that remorse is the voice of God, which reproaches them inwardly

* Thomas a Kempis, Lib. III. C. III. Sec. 3.

for their sins. When these sinners are effectually touched, they find no difficulty in understanding this secret voice; for it is that which smites them so sharply. It is in them the "two-edged sword"* St. Paul speaks of; it goes "to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit." God causes himself to be felt, tasted and obeyed: they hear this soft voice which conveys into the bottom of their heart a tender reproach, and by this the heart is broken. This is true and pure contrition.

God speaks likewise in enlightened and learned persons, whose outward lives are regular in all things, and who are apparently adorned with many virtues: but very frequently these persons being full of themselves and their own knowledge, hearken too much to themselves to hear God. They reason upon every thing: they do every thing upon principles of human wisdom and prudential rules, which would be infinitely better done through the channel of simplicity, and docility to the Spirit of God. These persons sometimes seem to have more goodness than others: and they even have it in a certain degree; but it is an adulterated goodness. They are masters of themselves, and would always be so according to the capacity of their reason, they would be always in the hand of their own council: they are strong and great in their own eyes. O my God "I thank

* Heb. iv. 12.

thee" with Jesus Christ, "that thou hast hid thy ineffable secrets from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."* It is only children thou art familiar with. Thou treatest others after their own way. They desire knowledge and splendid virtues; thou givest them shining parts, and makest them a kind of heroes. But this is not the best portion. There is something more reserved for thy dear children. They repose themselves with John on thy bosom. As for those great ones who always dread stooping and becoming little, thou lettest them remain in their greatness; thou treatest them according to their solemnity. They shall never taste thy caresses and familiar intercourse: we must become little children, and be dandled upon thy knees, to merit them. I have often remarked that a sinner of small natural understanding, when he becomes sensibly affected with the love of God and a sense of his errors, is more disposed to hear this inward language of the Spiritof Grace, than some enlightened and learned persons, who are grown old in their own wisdom. God who seeks only to communicate himself, knows not how, as I may say, to set a step in those souls, full of themselves, and so long nourished by their own wisdom and virtuous: but he converses freely withthe simple, and as the Scriptures say, "His secret is with the righteous."†

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* Matt. xi. 25. † Prov. iii. 32.

But where are these simple righteous ones? I see them not. God sees them, it is in them he is pleased to dwell.* "My Father and I," says Jesus Christ, "we will come unto them, and make our abode with them." O how does the soul given up entirely to the Spirit of God, regardless of itself, esteeming itself as nothing, and directed wholly by pure love, which is the only perfect guide—how does it, I say, experience things, which the wise of this world, can neither know or comprehend? I was wise (I may venture to say) as well as others; but then thinking I saw every thing, I saw in reality nothing: I went groping by a chain of reasons, but the light shined not in my darkness. I was satisfied with reasoning: but alas, when we silence all that is within us to hearken to God, we know all things without knowing any thing, and we can no longer doubt but that we were ignorant before of every thing we imagined we understood. All that we possessed vanishes, we regard it not: there is nothing that any more belongs to us; we have lost all; we are lost ourselves. There is an inexpressible something that says within us, as the spouse in the canticles: "Let me hear thy voice, for thy voice is sweet."† It makes all my bowels leap for joy. Speak, O my love, and let none dare to speak but thee. Be silent, O my soul, and speak, O thou my love. I say, we then know all things without knowing

* John xiv. 23. † Cant. ii. 14.

any thing. Not that we have the presumption to believe that we possess in ourselves all truth. No, no, quitet he contrary, we are sensible we see nothing, can do nothing, and are nothing. We feel it, I say, and are transported at the sense of it. But in thus giving up all without reserve, we find from time to time in the immensity of God, and the course of his providence, all that we stand in need of. There we find the daily bread of truth, as well as every thing else without providing for it. Then it is that the unction teacheth us all truths, by taking from us all our own wisdom, all our own glory, all our own interest, and all our self-will; by making us content with our own impotence, and willing to be under every creature, ready to yield to the meanest worm of the earth, ready to confess our most secret transgressions before all men, fearing nothing in our faults but our infidelity in confessing them, fearing neither the punishment nor shame of them. In this state, I say, the Spirit teaches us all truth: for all truth is eminently comprised in this sacrifice of love, where the soul strips itself of all, to give all to God. This is the manna which has the taste of all meats, without having the taste of any in particular.

CHAP. XVIII.

On the Prayer of the Pharisee.

The publicans, or tax gatherers, were very odious to the Jewish people, who were jealous of their liberty, and accustomed to have for their king God himself, or a prince of their own nation. In our Saviour's time, they were subject to the Roman government, which they impatiently submitted to. When our Saviour represents a publican, he sets before the eyes of those he would instruct, what was to them most profane and offensive. From hence it came to pass, that publicans and harlots are in the gospel placed in the same class.

As for the pharisees they were a sect of reformed men, who scrupulously observed the most minute circumstances according to the letter of the law. Their life was exemplary, and they were eminent for the performance of all outward virtues: but they were proud, supercilious, ambitious of the highest employments and authority, full of themselves and their good works, disdainful and censorious—in a word, they were blinded by a confidence in their own righteousness.

Our Saviour relates an history which represents these two characters, to show how much further the pharisee is from the kingdom of God than the

publican who is laden with iniquities. The publican deplores his sins; the pharisee recounts his virtues. The publican dare not petition for the graces of God; the pharisee boasts of those he has received. God declares in favour of the publican. He has more regard for the humble sinner, confounded at the sight of his miseries, than for the upright man, who delights in his righteousness, and assumes glory to himself from the gifts of God. To appropriate to ourselves the gifts of God, is to turn them against God, that we may thereby flatter our own pride. How dreadful are even the gifts of God, to a soul that seeks itself in them! It turns to poison the food of everlasting life: all that which should destroy the earthly life in us, serves only to maintain it. Our good works and austerities nourish our self-love: we secretly recount our mortifications, our conquests over our inclinations, our acts of righteousness, patience, humility and disinterestednes. We imagine that in all these things we seek only spiritual comfort, whereas, we really seek in them a prop to enable us to confide in ourselves, and what may yield an advantageous testimony of our own righteousness. We would always be in a state in which we might contemplate our own piety. When this inward testimony forsakes us, we are desolate, troubled, affrighted, and imagine that we have lost all.

This sensible testimony is the support of begin-

ners, it is the milk of tender souls in their infancy, which they must suck a long while, nor would it be safe to wean them. It belongs to God alone, to deprive them by degrees of this nourishment, and to substitute in its place the food of the strong. But when a soul long instructed and exercised in the gift of faith, begins to feel no more this witness so pleasant and refreshing, it ought to suffer this trial with patience, and not torment itself to recal what God has deprived it of. Then it ought to harden itself against itself, and be content, like the publican, to shew its misery to God, scarce daring to lift up its eyes to heaven. It is in this state that God purifies the soul, in proportion as he deprives it of the sight of its purity.

The soul is so infected with self-love, that it is always a little sullied at the sight of its own virtue: it returns thanks to God, but is rejoiced that it, and not another, is the person on whom the heavenly gifts are showered. In some souls that appear upright and simple, this manner of appropriating to themselves the graces of God, is very subtile and imperceptible. They do not themselves perceive the theft they commit. This theft is so much the worse, as it is of the purest gifts, and consequently excites the jealousy of God.

Those souls never cease to appropriate their virtues, until they cease to perceive them, and that all seems to have fled from them. Then they

cry out, like St. Peter when he was sinking, "Lord, save us, or we perish."* They no longer find any inward support; every thing fails them. There is nothing within them but what is subject of condemnation, of horror, hatred of themselves, of sacrifice and resignation. By thus losing all pharisaical own righteousness, they enter into the true righteousness of Jesus Christ, which they are careful not to consider as their own.

This pharisaical righteousness is much more common than we imagine. The first defect of it consists in placing all in outward performances, and superstitiously attaching ourselves to the letter of the law, to observe every tittle without seeking the spirit of it. This is exactly the case with many Christians. They fast, they give alms, they frequent the sacrament, they attend the service of the church, nay, they even pray without the love of God, without being detached from the world, without charity, without humility, and without the renunciation of self. They are nevertheless contented, provided they can boast of a certain number of good works regularly performed: this is to be a pharisee.

The second defect of this pharisaical righteousness, is what we have already remarked—a dependance on our own righteousness and strength,

* Mat. viii. 25.

which is so comfortable, because it is so great a support to nature. We are pleased at beholding our strength, and admire our virtue, as a vain woman does her beauty in a glass. The attachment to this view of our virtues, pollutes them, nourishes our self-love, and prevents our being detached from ourselves. This is the reason why so many souls, otherwise upright and full of good desires, are so intoxicated with themselves without ever advancing towards God. Under pretence of preserving this inward testimony, they are always with complacency occupied in self; they fear losing sight of it, as much as others do the being separated from God; they are desirous of seeing a certain order of virtues framed after their own fashion: they would always taste the pleasure of being acceptable to God. Thus they nourish themselves with a pleasure that enervates them, and with a superficial virtue that fills them with themselves.

We should then empty, and not fill them; we should harden them against themselves, and not accustom them to that tender sensibility, which has frequently nothing solid in it. This tenderness is to them, what the milk of a nurse would be to one arrived at man's estate. This nourishment weakens the soul instead of strengthening it. Besides, these souls depending too much on sensibility and an inward calm, are in danger of losing all in the first storm that arises; they lay hold

on nothing but the sensible gift: when that fails them, all sinks to the bottom without any resource. They despair when God tries them; they make no distinction between the sensible relish and God himself; for this reason, when their sensibility fails them, they conclude that God has abandoned them. Miserably blind are they, as St. Theresa says, who leave off prayer, when it purifies them and becomes most efficacious. A soul who lives on the dry bread of tribulation, who finds itself void of all goodness, who incessantly sees its poverty, its unworthiness and corruption, who is always seeking God, though repulsed by him, who seeks him through pure love, without seeking itself in him, is far superior to that soul that would see its own perfection, that would be grieved to lose sight of it, and desires that God may always prevent it with fresh caresses.

Let us follow God in the dark road of faith; let us lose sight of all that he would conceal from us; let us walk as Abraham did, without knowing whither he went; reckoning upon nothing but our misery and his mercy; let us go on straight forward, let us be simple, faithful, and never hesitate about sacrificing all to God. But let us beware of depending upon our own works, thoughts, or virtues. Let us always be tending towards God, without stopping to return to ourselves either with complacency or uneasiness. Let us devote to him all that we have, and think of nothing but how to

glorify him without intermission every moment of our lives.

CHAP. XIX.

On the best manner of helping ourselves, with regard to our daily transgressions.

There are many faults which are in different degrees voluntary, although not committed with a deliberate purpose to offend God. We frequently reproach our friend for a fault he does not commit on purpose to offend us, though he knew at the time of committing it, it would have that effect. God reproaches us in the same manner, for faults that are voluntary, and though not premeditated, are yet committed with our free will, and in opposition to the inward light of conscience, which should at least suffice to make us doubt of, and suspend the action. These are such faults as pious souls are often guilty of; but as to deliberate sins, it is very uncommon for such as are entirely devoted to God, to fall into them. Small faults appear great and monstrous in our eyes, in proportion as the pure light of God increases in our souls; as the rising sun discovers to us with more exactness and clearness, those objects which during the night we could only see confusedly. You may be certain that the encrease of your inward

light, will discover to you many imperfections, in a far worse and more malignant light than they have hitherto appeared in to you; and besides you will see many other miseries flow out of your heart, which you little suspected were to be found there. You will find in it a weakness that is necessary to deprive you of all confidence in yourself; but this experience far from discouraging you, will only serve to tear from you all self-confidence, and raze the whole edifice of pride. Nothing so much proves the solid advancement of a soul, as thus seeing its misery without disquiet or dejection.

A soul that depends on God alone, is not surprised at the sight of its own wretchedness. It is contented to see that it can do nothing, and that God alone can do all. My own poverty I disregard, when I know that my father possesses infinite riches, which he is willing to bestow on me.

One important rule is to abstain from sin, whenever we perceive it before the commission, and courageously to humble ourselves, when we perceive it after it is committed.

If we perceive it before commission, let us beware of resisting or extinguishing the Spirit of God, who inwardly warns us of it; it is delicate and jealous; it would be listened to and followed; if we grieve it, it withdraws its influence; the

least resistance to it is an offence; every thing must yield to it, when it makes itself perceptible. Faults committed through precipitation or weakness are trifles, in comparison of those where we are deaf to the secret voice of the blessed Spirit, which speaks in the bottom of our hearts.

As to those faults which we do not perceive till after they are committed, the vexation and uneasiness of self-love will never prove a remedy for them; on the contrary, this vexation is only the vexation of pride at the sight of what confounds it. The only use then to be made of these faults is, to humble ourselves in peace; I say in peace, because it is not humbling ourselves, if we do not receive this humiliation with a good will, and without chagrin. We should with an hearty sigh condemn our errors, and exercise every beneficial act of self-denial with regard their amendment; we should not seek for any excuses to palliate them, but lay our soul before God in this state of confusion, without being exasperated against ourselves, and without suffering our error to discourage us, but tranquilly profit by the humiliation which it causes; thus we draw from the serpent itself, a remedy against its sting; the confusion which arises from the sight of sin, in a soul that does not bear it impatiently, is a remedy against the sin itself; but to resent the humiliation is not being humbled.

Very frequently that which we offer unto God, is not that which he most desires from us; and that which he most desires, is that which we are least willing to give, and dread his requiring: it is that Isaac, that only son, that well beloved son, which he would have us sacrifice without compassion: every thing else is as nothing in his eyes, and he suffers all else that we do to be painful and fruitless, because his blessing is not in the work of a soul that is divided: he would have all, and until he obtains it, allows the soul no rest. The Scripture says, "*Who can resist God, and be at peace?" Would you be at peace, would you secure the blessing of God upon your labours? Reserve nothing; wound yourself even to the quick; spare nothing; and the God of peace will be with you. What consolation, what liberty, what strength, what enlargement of heart, what increase of grace, when there is nothing left between God and self, and that we have made, without hesitation, the last sacrifice.

The integrity of our past confessions consist not in our having not omitted any of our faults, but solely in having ingenuously confessed all that we were then conscious of. At that time, we had not the light to discover in our hearts, many emotions of malignant and depraved nature, which now begin to show themselves. As the pure light of

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* Job ix. 4.

God increases in our hearts, we find ourselves more corrupt than we imagine; we are surprised at our past blindness, when we perceive to issue out of our hearts, as out of a deep cave, an infinite number of shameful sentiments, like vile and poisonous reptiles: we can scarce believe that we harboured them in our bosoms, and detest ourselves as we discover them.

We should not be either astonished or discouraged. It is no proof that we are more wicked than we have been; on the contrary, we are less so: but while our evils lessen, the light that shews them to us increases, and we are seized with horror. But let us observe for our comfort, that we do not perceive our evils, till we begin to remedy them. When we are destitute of every principle towards their amendment, we perceive not the depth of our evil: this is a state of blindness, presumption, and insensibility; we suffer ourselves to be carried down the current, and feel not its rapidity, but it begins to make itself felt, in proportion as we begin more or less to strive against it. In the correction of our faults, we should neither flâtter nor be impatient with ourselves.

When any thing is required from you that seems impossible to nature; say to yourself, nothing is impossible to God.

We must not be discouraged either by the ex-

perience of our weakness, or the dislike of a busy life, if we are engaged in it. It is a mercy from God that we bewail this perturbation; and the bewailing it is an antidote which prevents its corrupting our hearts. Discouragement is not an humble state; on the contrary, it is the vexation and despair of a slothful pride: nothing is so pernicious. When we stumble, or even fall, let us think of nothing but rising again, and renewing our course: all our faults are profitable to us, provided that while they take from us an ill-placed confidence in ourselves, they do not deprive us of an humble salutary confidence in God.

The repugnance which we feel with regard to our duties, undoubtedly arises from our imperfections. If we were perfect we should delight in all the commands of God: but since we are born in a corrupted state, and are by nature revolted from his laws; let us praise God, who knows how to extract good out of evil, to make use of our repugnance to advance our progress in several virtues. The work of grace, as St. Theresa observes, is not like the operations of nature which proceed regularly.

It is not surprising that our hearts should be filled with the love of ourselves: we are by nature made up of vain self-complacency, and a passionate desire to prosper in every thing. We must not discourage and disquiet ourselves by proving

our miseries within us, which are every moment growing and fermenting in our hearts: we need only not regard them, turn peacefully to God, and sacrifice to him all our frivolous inclinations.

How shameful is it for a soul created for God, to have such a propensity to self-idolatry! We should humble and suspect ourselves, make use of that wicked propensity to encrease our self-contempt, and lastly, generously and courageously perform all that the Spirit of God requires from us.

Be discouraged at nothing, but support yourself with humility in your inequalities, weaknesses and troubles; and bless God from the bottom of your heart for the progress others make in virtue, as sincerely as if you had made it yourself; do not disquiet yourself with the emotions of self-love, but let them pass by without deigning to observe them.

By impatiently feeling the trouble which excites your confusion, you act like a rash gold-smith, who seeing his gold melted in the crucible, throws it away, imagining all to be lost. In proportion as this trouble is pernicious when voluntarily indulged, so is it salutary when you bear it with fidelity, and without discouragement. Dread, above all things, deliberately to offend God, and though these faults which we fall into through

levity, are easily repaired, they fail not to quench charity, if they become habitual and sojourn in our hearts, according to these words of holy writ, "Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary "to send forth a stinking savour."*

Purify then carefully your conscience from all the errors of the day; never let sin reside in your heart; be it ever so small it will obscure the light of grace; it will render the soul heavy: it will prevent, in some degree, that commerce which ought to subsist between the soul and Jesus Christ; and in the end it will cause it to become luke-warm, to grow forgetful of God, and more sensible of terrestrial enjoyments. On the contrary, a pure soul that humbly and immediately raises itself up after the smallest faults, is always fervent and upright.

God makes us sensible of our weakness, only that he may give us strength: all that is involuntary need give us no concern: the chief thing is never to act in opposition to our inward light, and to be ready to go as far as God would lead us.

Eccl. x. 1.

CHAP. XX.

On Fidelity in small Matters.

Francis de Sales says, that great virtues and little fidelities, are like salt and sugar. Sugar has the more exquisite taste, but is not so frequently used: on the contrary, salt is made use of with all food necessary to life. Great virtues are rare. The opportunity of practising them seldom happens. When it does, we are prepared for them by all that preceded them, we are excited to them by the greatness of the sacrifice, and supported in them either by the glory of the action in the eyes of others, or by a self-complacency arising from the extraordinary effort we have exerted in performing them. Trifles come unforeseen, they occur every instant, and incessantly make us contend with our pride, our sloth, our haughtiness, our passion and chagrin: they afford us constant opportunities of renouncing our own will without reserve. If we are faithful in them, nature has not time to breathe, but must die to all its inclinations. We would much rather perform certain great sacrifices, though they should be violent and painful, than be denied the liberty of following our own taste and disposition on all trifling occasions; nevertheless, it is only by a fidelity in small matters that the grace of pure love supports itself, and is distinguished from the transitory fervours of nature.

It is in pity, as in the economy of temporal goods: we shall be sooner ruined by the neglect of trifles than by great expences. Whoever knows how to make small matters turn to the best account, will, in spiritual as well as temporal affairs, amass great riches. The greatest sums are only small ones accumulated and carefully collected. He who lets nothing be lost, will soon grow rich.

Besides, we should consider that God does not so much regard our actions, as the motive of love which incites us to perform them, and the compliance he requires of our will. Men judge of our actions only by what appears outwardly, God accounts as nothing all that is in them most glaring in the eyes of men.

What he would have, is a pure intention, a will ready for all things, and pliant in his hands, with a sincere detachment from ourselves. All this is often excercised with less danger to our pride, and in a way that tries us more severely, on common occasions, than on the most extraordinary. Nay, we often value a trifle more than a matter seemingly of great importance; we should perhaps find more difficulty to renounce a favourite amusement, than to bestow a large sum in alms.

We the more easily deceive ourselves in small things, as we believe them innocent, and imagine ourselves less attached to them. Nevertheless, we

may easily perceive by our concern when it pleases God to deprive us of them, how excessive and inexcusable our enjoyment of, and attachment to them was. Besides, if we are negligent on small occasions, we shall hourly give offence to our family, our domestics and the world. They cannot imagine that we are sincerely pious, when in particular instances they perceive us remiss and irregular. What reason have they to believe, that we should without hesitation make the greatest sacrifices, when they see that we decline the smallest?

But what is of all other things the most dangerous is, that this neglect of trivial matters, accustoms the soul to infidelity. It grieves the Holy Spirit,—we become abandoned to our own will, and regard as nothing an offence against God. On the contrary, perfect love esteems nothing little,—every thing that can either please or displease God seems important to it. Not that perfect love fills the soul with uneasiness and scruples, but it sets no bounds to its fidelity. It works simply with God; and as it does not embarrass itself with things that God requires not of it, so it never hesitates a moment upon what he does require, whether it be great or whether it be small. It is not then by uneasiness that we become faithful, but by a sentiment of love, which is free from the fears and disquiets of a scrupulous soul. We are as it were drawn on by the love of God, nor do we wish to act otherwise than we do. Whilst

God urges the soul, incessantly impels it with regard to the smallest particulars, and seems to deprive it of all liberty, it finds itself enlarged, and enjoys a profound peace in him. O how happy is the soul in this state!

As for those who have naturally less exactness, they ought to observe a more inviolable law with regard to small matters. They are tempted to despise them; to count them as nothing: they do not enough consider the consequence of them: they do not represent to themselves the insensible progress of the passions; they even forget their own fatal experiences. They choose rather to promise themselves an imaginary steadiness, and to confide in their own courage, which has so often deceived them, than to be subject to a continual fidelity. It is a trifle, they say: Yes, it is a trifle, but such a trifle as is every thing to you, a trifle to which you are so attached as to refuse to part with it to God; a trifle, which in order to excuse the refusal of, you despise in words, but in reality such a trifle as you keep back from God, and as will prove your destruction. It is not a greatness of soul which induces us to despise small things: on the contrary, it is by having too limited views, that we regard any thing as small, which is attended with such important consequences. The more difficulty we find in attending to small things, the more we ought to fear our negligence, mistrust ourselves, and place invincible barriers between us and our

remissness. "He that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little."*

Lastly, judge by yourself. Would you live in harmony with a friend who owed every thing to you, and who would through duty serve you on such occasions as he called great, but would not subject himself to have either regard or complacency for you in the common intercourse of life?

Fear not this continual attention to small things. At first some steadiness and courage will be necessary; but it is a self-denial you deserve, that you have occasion for, that will constitute your peace and security; without it you cannot have either. God will by degrees render this state sweet and easy. True love is attentive without pain or contention.

CHAP. XXI.

Extracts from a chapter On transitory Motions, on Fidelity and Simplicity.

Whenever you perceive in yourself a motion of vain complacency, self confidence, haughtiness, and impatience at the weakness of others, or at the troubles of your own state, you should let all

* Eccles. xix. 1.

these things fall as a stone to the bottom of the sea; you must recollect yourself before God, and defer acting till you are in such a disposition as recollection ought to put you in. If the dissipation of business or the vivacity of your imagination, prevents the soul from recollecting itself in a sweet, easy and sensible manner, you should at least endeavour to calm it by the rectitude of your will, and the desire of recollection. Then the very desire of recollection becomes a kind of recollection, which is sufficient to strip the soul of its own will, and render it pliant to the hand of God.

If through the surprise of passion, any malignant emotion of nature should escape you, do not be discouraged; still pursue your road; bear in peace before God the humiliation of your fault, without suffering the sharp indignation that self-love causes you to feel at the sight of your own weakness, to retard you in your course. Proceed still with confidence, without being disquieted at the chagrin of a delicate pride, that cannot bear to see itself imperfect: your fault will serve, by the inward confusion it occasions, to promote the death of self, to prevent the appropriation of the gifts of God, and to cause you to consider yourself as nothing before him.

The best reparation of your fault, is to die to all the sensibilities of seif-love, without retarding

the progress of grace, which by this transitory infidelity you have a little interrupted.

The principal thing is to renounce your own wisdom by a simple conduct, and to be ready to sacrifice the favour, esteem and approbation of the world, whenever God so conducts you as to render it expedient

We are not to meddle with such things as God requires not of us, nor needlessly expose ourselves, by asserting truths which well-meaning people are not yet able to bear.

We must follow God, but never anticipate him. When he gives the signal, we must part with and hazard all to follow him. To hesitate, to stop, to be effeminate, to faint at what he would have us do, to dread the exposing ourselves too much, to be willing to shelter ourselves from all disgusts and contradictions, to seek plausible excuses to dispense with our performing certain good actions, attended with difficulty and trouble, when we are convinced in our conscience that God expects them from us, and that he has placed us in a state to accomplish them; this would be to re-take ourselves, after having without reserve devoted ourselves to God.

I beseech you to beware of this infidelity; nothing is so terrible as inwardly to resist God; it

is the sin against the Holy Ghost, which Jesus Christ assures us, "shall not be forgiven, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."*

This resistance insensibly extinguishes the Spirit of Grace in your heart. God jealous and slighted, after having bestowed on you so many graces, will at length withdraw his aid, and abandon you to yourself.

God has given you ingenuity and candour, which without doubt are pleasing to him: this is the foundation on which he would erect an edifice pleasing unto him.

He expects from you a simplicity, which will be by so much the more his wisdom, as it will not be your own. He desires to have you little in your own eyes, and pliant as a child in his hands. It is this infant state, so contrary to the spirit of man, and so recommended in the gospel, that God would instil into your hearts, in spite of the corruption that reigns in the world, where it is so much unknown and despised.

It is even by this simplicity and lowliness, that he wishes to cure in you the remains of a proud and suspicious wisdom. You ought to say with David, "I will yet be more simple, more vile and

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*Matt. xii. 32.

little in my own sight,"* from the moment I am given up to God.

Provided that you are faithful to read enough for the nourishment of your heart, and for your instruction; that you recollect yourself from time to time in some moments stolen from the day, and lastly, that you have stated times for intercourse with God; you will perceive well enough all that you have to do in the exercise of every virtue. Opportunities of practising them will offer of themselves, and if you are simple in the presence of God, he will not long suffer you to continue in uncertainty.

But what may be the source of distraction, and prevent these graces which God is willing to pour down upon you, as a torrent, is your fearing to go too far in virtue, and so not leaving God at liberty to act in you at the expence of your wisdom.

Above all things set no bounds to him. It is not necessary that you should undertake great things, which perhaps God does not require of you, in the manner you comprehend; but that you should follow without eagerness, precipitation, or self-motion, the overtures hourly made you by God, to open the hearts of your friends, and discover to them what they owe to God in their state.

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* 2 Sam. vi. 22.

This is a work of patience, faith and continual attention: you should be wonderfully discreet in it, and be careful not to follow thereupon a certain zeal which indiscreetly overheats itself; but this so necessary discretion is not what you may imagine: it is not like a worldly discretion, when we take measures with ourselves; but only a constant attention to God, and having our eyes incessantly turned towards him, that we may not move but as he impels us, outwardly by the opportunities his providence furnishes us with, and inwardly by the lights he communicates to us.

I pray God to pour down on you the grace of the infancy of Jesus, with peace, confidence and the joy of the Holy Ghost.

CHAP. XXII.

We are not to judge of the Virtues and Vices either of ourselves or others, according to human ideas.

If we are surprised at the weakness and corruption of men, it is a sign we have not dived deep enough into the misery of human nature in general, and of our own in particular. If we expect nothing good from men, nothing that is evil in them would astonish us. Our astonishment proceeds then from our regarding humanity as

something, whereas it is nothing, and worse than nothing. The tree ought not to surprise us, when it bears its natural fruits. But all our admiration is due to Jesus Christ, into whom we were grafted, as St. Paul says, when we were wild grapes, and instead of our former bitter fruits, produce the delicious fruits of virtue.

Be not deceived by the most specious appearances of human virtue, which is poisoned by vain complacency and self-confidence. "That which is highly esteemed amongst men, is abomination in the sight of God."* It is an inward and perpetual idolatry. This idolatry, though concealed under the splendor of divers virtues, is more horrible than many other sins which we esteem more enormous. There is but one only way of judging rightly, which is to judge as God does. Sins committed through weakness, passion or ignorance, offend God less, than the virtues which a soul full of itself exercises, attributing all to its own excellence, as to its only deity: for this is the total overthrow of the whole design of God in the creation. Let us cease then to judge of virtues and vices, according to our own opinion which self-love has depraved, and according to our false ideas of grandeur. There is nothing great, but that which abases itself before the sole and sovereign greatness. The bias of our heart, and being

* Luke xiv. 15.

accustomed to grandeur, makes us endeavour to be great: but God would humble and lessen us in his hands. Let us suffer him to do so.

Many people who seek God, are and often remain full of miseries: not that God authorises their imperfections; but because their imperfections retard them, and prevent their advancing to him in the shortest way. They cannot advance quickly, for they are burthened with themselves, and a long train of superfluities, which they with eagerness and jealousy bring back to themselves. Some believe they go on straight forward, while they use certain little windings, to arrive at those ends which appear to them lawful: others are ignorant of their own hearts, and imagine themselves attached to nothing, though they are attached to every thing, and the smallest interest or obstruction overcomes them.

They are flattered by their own reasons, while they weigh those of others by the weights of the sanctuary: and by this means, while they talk of nothing but righteousness and fidelity, they become really unjust. They are prejudiced against such as they are jealous of: this jealousy, which conceals itself in the most inward recesses of the heart, exaggerates the smallest defects; they are full of their neighbours' failings, and cannot be silent with regard to them; in spite of themselves they betray their dislike and contempt. Hence

proceed artful criticisms and ill offices, which they are guilty of, without being intentionally so.

The heart contracted by self-love, deceives itself that it may indulge in what is agreeable to it: it is weak, restless, timorous, ready to quarrel with you, to flatter you, or to offer you incense, in order to obtain this indulgence. Such a man is so taken up with himself, that he has neither time nor thought for his neighbour. Now and then the fear of God disturbs him in his false peace, and forces him to some friendly action, but it is through fear, and not with a good will that he performs it. This is a foreign, transitory and violent impulse: he soons falls back again into himself, where he becomes his own all, and even his God; every thing for self, or for what brings him back to it, and the whole world beside is nothing to him. It is true he would neither be ambitious, avaricious, unjust or treacherous: but it is not the love of God in him that renders permament all the virtues in opposition to these vices; on the contrary, it is a strange fear, which comes by irregular fits, and which suspends all these vices, natural to a soul attached to itself.

This is what I lament so much, this is what makes me so much desire a religion of pure faith and an unreserved death, which tears the soul from itself without the hope of any return

People regard this perfection as too high and impracticable. Well then, let them fall back into that self-love which fears God only for self, which is always falling back and slothfully recovering itself to the end of life. While they are in love with themselves, they cannot but be full of misery; they make indeed a better appearance than others, when they are more glorious and more delicate in their glory; but these outsides have no true support in them. It is this devotion which is mixed with self-love that infects us: it is this which gives offence, and which God himself spews out;—when shall we likewise spew it out, and come to the source of our disorder?

When piety is carried to this, people are affrighted, and thinks it goes too far. When it does not go so far, it is dull, jealous, delicate, interested. Few people have courage and fidelity enough to lose themselves, to forget and make themselves of no reputation; consequently few people do all the honour to piety they ought to do.

There are faults committed through passion and frailty, that you easily enough comprehend are not incompatible with sincere piety; but you do not as clearly comprehend, that other faults, which are the consequence of illusion, self-love and custom, are compatible with a sincere intention to please God. It is true this intention is

neither pure nor strong enough: however, though weak and imperfect, it is sincere within its own limits. A person is covetous, but he perceives it not: it is hid under specious pretences; he calls it economy, a care to avoid waste, a prudential foresight. Another is envious, but perceives not this base malignant passion which conceals itself, it dare not appear, the sight of it would be productive of too much confusion; it therefore disguises itself, and sometimes deceives the person that is tortured with it, more effectually than those who examine it with critical eyes. A third is full of asperity, delicate, difficult to be pleased, and apt to take offence on all occasions: all this is the effect of self-interestedness; but this interestedness adorns itself with an hundred specious reasonings. If you hearken to it, there will be no end to the dispute: it will make you confess it is not in the wrong. I conclude therefore that good people, and you as well as others, are full of imperfections mixed with their good will; because their will although good, is still weak, divided and retarded by the secret springs of self-love.

Your very ardour against the defects of others, is in itself a great defect. That disdain at the misery of others, is a misery that does not sufficiently know itself. My God, when shall we regard as nothing all that is in ourselves or others? God is all good, the creature all evil.

You fear that you will at length despise the whole human race. In one sense, I wish you would despise it, so far as it is truly despicable. The light of God alone can, by its increasing in you, enable you to penetrate the abyss of evil, which is in the heart of every man. But while it shows you the depth of this evil, it shows you also the good that God blends with it. It is a mixture of good and evil that we can scarce persuade ourselves of. It is the good and bad seed* which the enemy has mixed. The servants would separate them; but the master of the family cries out: "Let both grow together till the time of harvest."

The chief thing is, not to be discouraged at so sad a spectacle, nor to carry our distrust too far. People who are naturally open and confident, are more dejected and distrustful than others, when they are by experience discouraged from being so, they are then like cowards, who when rendered desperate, become more than valiant. You have much to guard against from this quarter; for besides, that your situation exposes to your view the miseries of the whole human race, envy, jealousy, rash judgments, and the malignity of bad offices, likewise represent numberless innocent things as evil, and unmercifully exaggerate many slight imperfections. All these things unite to attack and weary your patience, your confidence

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Matt. xiii. 25, 27, 29.

and charity: but be not moved, God reserves to himself faithful servants, who if they do not do all, do a great deal in comparison of the rest of the corrupted world, and considering their fallen nature. They see their imperfections, and are humbled at them, they fight against them, they correct them, it is true, but slowly, but in the end they do correct them; they praise God for what they have done, and condemn themselves for what they have left undone. God is content—do thou therefore be the same.

If you are convinced as I am, that God ought to be served in a better manner: then, without hesitation or setting any bounds to your desires, aspire after this true worship, where the creature has nothing left for it, and where all self-interested returns are banished as an infidelity. O that this blessed state was yours! far from impatiently bearing with those who are not in it, the vast extent of your heart would then render you indulgent and compassionate to all the weaknesses of their interested and contracted hearts. The more perfect we are ourselves, the more apt we are to make allowances for the imperfections of others. The pharisees could not endure the publicans and harlots, with whom Jesus Christ conversed with so much mildness and lenity. When we are no longer attached to self, we enter into that greatness of God which nothing wearies or discourages. When will you attain this liberty

and enlargement of heart? That delicacy and sensibility which we believe to proceed from an exquisite taste of virtue, proceeds rather from the contraction of our hearts. He who no longer lives to himself is, through God, every thing to his neighbour: he who is still in self, lives neither to God or his neighbour, but in a very small degree, and in a very small proportion to the attachment he retains for himself. May peace, truth, simplicity, liberty, pure faith and a disinterested love, make you a perfect burnt-offering.

CHAP. XXIII.

On the advantages of Silence and Recollection.

You should now endeavour to be as silent as the decency of human intercourse will permit. Silence produces the presence of God, prevents many haughty and offensive words, and finally suppresses much raillery, and the passing many dangerous judgments on our neighbour. Silence humbles the spirit, and by degrees detaches it from the world; it creates a kind of solitude in the heart, such as you desire: it will supply all your wants in those perplexities you experience. Provided you never speak unprofitably, you will have many vacant moments, even in the midst of

company in which you are detained against your will.

You wish for liberty to pray to God; and God who knows better than you what is needful for you, mortifies you by placing you in a state of perplexity and subjection. The mortification that comes by the direction of God, will be more beneficial to you than the delights of prayer, made according to your own choice and fancy. You are not ignorant that so much retirement is not necessary in order to love God: when he affords you leisure, you must take it, and profit by it: till then exercise your faith, by firmly believing that whatever he gives you is best for you.

Lift up your heart often to him, without any exterior demonstration: speak only through necessity, and suffer patiently whatever comes across you. God deals with you according to your wants, and as you are sensible of the truths of religion, you require more to be mortified than to receive fresh lights. The only thing I dread for you in this state, is dissipation, but this you may avoid by silence. If you are faithful to remain silent when it is not necessary for you to speak, God will not in his mercy suffer you to be dissipated by useful conversation.

When you have but little time at your own disposal, neglect not to manage that little: half a

quarter of an hour employed with this fidelity in the midst of your embarrassments, will be more acceptable in the sight of God, than whole hours dedicated to him when you have more leisure. Besides, several short intervals of the day, collected together, will make something considerable, and perhaps may be attended with this advantage, that you may in this state call more frequently on God, than if he had given you the liberty of enjoying certain stated times for devotion. To love, to be silent, to suffer, to act contrary to your own inclination, in order to accomplish the will of God, by accommodating yourself to that of your neighbour, this is your lot; and happy are you to bear the cross, which God gives you from his own hands in the course of his providence.

These mortifications which we choose ourselves, or which are imposed on us, do not destroy self-love so effectually as those which God daily distributes to us. Those have nothing in them which can support our self-will: and as they come immediately from a merciful Providence, they bring with them a grace proportioned to all our necessities. We have therefore nothing to do, but daily without any further regard, to resign ourselves to God, who carries us in his arms as a tender mother does her child: let us believe, hope and love with all the simplicity of children: in all our necessities, let us, full of love and confidence, turn our eyes towards our heavenly Father; behold what

he says in the Scriptures: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee."*

CHAP. XXIV.

On the advantages of the Cross.

We find it difficult to be convinced of the mercy of God in loading those he loves with crosses. Why, say they, should he delight in our sufferings? Cannot he make us good without making us miserable? Yes, without doubt, God could do so; for nothing is impossible to him. He holds in his almighty hands the hearts of the children of men, and turneth them as he pleaseth. But God who has power to save us without the cross, has not willed it so: in like manner as he has willed that men should arrive at maturity by degrees, and first pass through all the distresses and weaknesses of childhood, rather than be born in the full strength of riper years. In this he is the master, our part is to be silent and adore his profound wisdom, although we do not comprehend it. This much we clearly see, that we cannot become truly good, but in proportion as we become humble, disinte-

* Isaiah xlix. 15.

terested, and detached from self, so as to render all to God without any return to ourselves.

The operation of grace which detaches us from ourselves, and tears us from self-love, must, without a miracle of grace, be painful. God does not in the operations of grace, any more than in those of nature, daily work miracles. It would be as great a miracle in grace to see a person full of himself, become in a moment dead to all self-interest and sensibility, as to see the child that went to bed last night, rise this morning as tall and as strong as a man of thirty. God conceals his operations in the course of grace as well as nature, under an insensible succession of events, and by this means keeps us in the obscurity of faith. He not only accomplishes his work by degrees, but by means the most simple and suitable for its success; that the means appearing suitable to the end, human wisdom may attribute the success to second causes, and so the finger of God be less observed, otherwise all that God effects, would be evidently a perpetual miracle, which would destroy that faith in which he would have us live.

This state of faith is not only necessary for the good, whose reason it obliges them to sacrifice in a life full of darkness; but also to blind those who, by their presumption, deserve to be suffered to blind themselves. These seeing the works of God, do not comprehend them; they perceive

nothing but what is natural in them; they are deprived of the true knowledg, because they merit it only so far as they distrust their own understanding, and because arrogant wisdom is unworthy of discovering the mysteries of God.

It is then to preserve us in this obscurity of faith with regard to the operation of grace, that God renders it tedious and painful. He makes use of the inconstancy and ingratitude of the creatures, and the disgusts and disappointments we experience in prosperity, to detach us from ourselves and that deceitful prosperity. He prevents our being proud of ourselves by the experience of our weakness and corruption, which is manifest from our numberless relapses. All this appears natural, and it is this succession of means, apparently natural, that renders us luke-warm. We desire to be instantaneously consumed by the flames of pure love; but this sudden destruction would cost us scarcely any thing: it is the excess of our self-love that makes us eager to become thus perfect in a moment, and at so cheap a rate.

What is it makes us rebel against the continuance of crosses? It is an attachment to ourselves, and it is this attachment that God would destroy. For while we thus hold to ourselves, the work of God can never be completed.

Of what then can we complain? our evil is that

we are attached to the creatures, and still more to ourselves. God prepares a succession of events which by degrees detach us from the creatures, and in the end from ourselves. This operation is painful; but it is our corruption which renders it necessary, and occasions all the pain that we suffer. If our flesh was sound, the surgeon would make no incision in it: he only cuts in proportion to the depth of the wound, and so far as the flesh is corrupted. If the operation is painful to us, it is because of the extremity of our disorder. Is it cruelty in the surgeon to cut to the quick? no, quite the reverse, it is affection, it is judgment; he would thus treat his only son.

God deals with us after the same manner. He never wounds us but, as I may say, in spite of himself. His fatherly heart does not seek to vex us: but he cuts us to the quick in order to heal the ulcer in our hearts. He must tear from us what we love too much, what we love with an irregular and faulty love, what we so love as to be prejudicial to the love of him. And what is the consequence of this treatment? He makes us cry, like children when a knife is taken from them with which they were playing, and with which they might have killed themselves. We weep and discourage ourselves, we cry aloud, and are ready to murmur against God, as children that are vexed with their mothers. But God suffers us to cry and saves us. Even when he appears to overwhelm

us, it is for our advantage, and to prevent the injury we would do ourselves. What we lament, would have made us lament eternally. What we esteemed lost, was really lost when we imagined we possessed it. God has secured it, that he may speedily restore it to us in an approaching eternity. He deprives us of the things we love, that we may love them with a pure, solid and temperate love, and that he may secure to us the eternal enjoyment of them in his bosom, so as to do us an hundred fold more good, than we ourselves know how to desire in them.

Nothing happens in this world but according to the will of God. It is he who does all, governs all, and gives to every thing all that it hath. He counts the hairs of our head, the leaves of each tree, the grains of sand on the shore, and the drops of water that compose the depths of the ocean. In the creation of the universe, his wisdom measured and weighed the smallest atom. It is he that each moment produces and renews the breath of life which animates us; it is he who numbers our days, and holds in his omnipotent hands the keys of the grave to open or to shut it.

What strikes us most, is as nothing in the sight of God; a little more or a little less of life, is a difference which disappears in the presence of his eternity. Of what importance is it whether this

weak vessel, this body of clay, should be reduced to ashes a little sooner or a little later?

O how contracted are our views of things! We are alarmed to see a person die in the flower of his youth. We cry out, what a dreadful loss is this! But to whom is the loss? what does he lose that dies? A few years of vanity and illusion, to be spent in danger of eternal death. God takes him away from the midst of his iniquities, and hastens to snatch him from this corrupted world, and his own weakness. What do they lose who most loved him? They lose the poison of a worldly felicity; they are deprived of a perpetual intoxication; they lose the forgetfulness of God and themselves, into which they were plunged; or rather they gain by the efficacy of the cross, the blessedness that arises from detachment. The same stroke that saves him who dies, prepares others (whom their sorrows detach from themselves) courageously to work out their salvation.

True it is then, that God is good, tender and compassionate of our real miseries, even when he seems to level his thunder at us, and that we are tempted to complain of his severity.

What difference is there between two persons who lived an hundred years ago? One of them survived the other twenty years; but now they are both dead. Their separation, which at that

time appeared so long and irksome, does not appear so to us now, and was in truth but a short separation. Some regard themselves as if they were immortal, or at least as if they had many years before them. O the folly of human wisdom! Those we see dying every day, follow close upon those who are already dead. The man who this day sets out on a journey, would not think himself at a great distance from him who set off but two days before him. Life glides away like a torrent. The past is but a dream; the present, when we think we enjoy it, flies from us, and sinks into the abyss of the past; the future will be of the same nature, and will as rapidly pass by us. The days, the months, the years, like the waves of the sea, flow one after another. In a few moments, in a very few, I say, and all shall be ended.

Alas, what now appears so long through tediousness and sorrow, will appear short to us when it shall have an end!

The extreme sensibility of our present troubles proceeds from the weakness of self love. The sick man who cannot sleep imagines the night to be endless, yet is that night as short as any other. Our sloth exaggerates all our troubles: they are great, it is true, but our delicacy augments them. The true method of abridging them, is courageously to abandon ourselves to God. It is true we suffer, but then it is by the will of God, in order

to purify us, and render us worthy of him. The world smiled upon us, and this prosperity poisoned our hearts. Would we spend all our days, even to the dreadful moment of our death, in that softness, that delicacy, that vain joy, that splendor, that triumph of pride, that relish for the world which is at enmity with Jesus Christ, and that distance from the cross, which alone ought to sanctify us? The world will frown upon us, it will ungratefully forget us and cease to acknowledge us, it will consider us as in the class of those things which no longer exist. Well, and are we to be surprised that the world continues to be like itself, unjust, deceitful, perfidious? Yet it is this world we are not ashamed to love, and that we perhaps wish to love still longer. It is from this abominable world that God would tear us, to deliver us from its cursed slavery, that we may enter into the liberty of detached souls; and this is the thing that afflicts us! If we are so sensible of the indifference of this world, which is in itself so contemptible, we must be great enemies to ourselves. What, cannot we bear what is so beneficial for us; and must we regret what is so fatal to us? This is the source of our tears and sorrows.

O my God, thou who seest the foundation of our misery, it is thou alone that canst heal it. Haste then to bestow on us faith, hope, love, and that Christian fortitude which we want. Grant that we may incessantly look up to thee, O Father

Almighty, who givest nothing to thy dear children but what is conducive to their salvation, and to thy son Jesus, who is our example for suffering. Thou hast for our sakes nailed him to the cross; thou hast made him a man of sorrows, to teach us how beneficial sorrows are to us. Let effeminate and slothful nature then be silent at the sight of Jesus, laden with reproaches, and bent down with the weight of his sufferings. Lift up my heart, O my God; give me one like unto thine own, that will harden me against myself, that will fear only to displease thee, or at least will only dread eternal pains, and not those that prepare us for thy kingdom. Lord, thou seest the weakness and wretchedness of thy creature, who has no resource in himself, every thing fails him, and so much the better, provided thou dost not fail him, and that with confidence he seeks in thee all that he despairs to find in his own heart.

CHAP. XXV.

On Crosses.

All that is painful in our way to God, are crosses, which we must patiently bear, and they will be a means of uniting us to him if we suffer them humbly. The things that confound and overwhelm our pride, will do us still more good,

than such as animate our virtue. We have need to be cast down, like St. Paul at the gates of Damascus, and to be deprived of all resource but in God alone.

Nature only inspires an haughty and disdainful courage, and is provoked at those persons that God makes use of in order to humble us.

We must bear his crosses in silence, with an humble peaceful courage; being strong in God, but not in ourselves; great through the sweetness of patience, and little through humility.

When God in the humiliations he sends us, wounds us even to the quick, so much the better: it is the merciful physician that applies a remedy to those disorders he has a mind to heal: let us be silent, and adore the hand that strikes us: let us not open our mouths but to say, I have well deserved it. Be the cup ever so bitter, we must drink it even to the dregs, as did Jesus Christ. He died even for his murderers, and has taught us to love, bless, and pray for those who are the cause of our sufferings.

In the seasons of adversity and temptation we ought to redouble our prayers. We shall find in the heart of Jesus dying on the cross, all that we want in our own, to engage us to love those whom our pride prompts us to hate.

When we love the cross, it is but half a cross, because love softens every thing; and we suffer much because we love little. Happy is he who suffers much, and wretched is he who suffers not with Jesus Christ, for we are come into this world only to be made perfect through sufferings.

God tries us by sickness, and by outward subjections, all which we must turn to our advantage. All our crosses are necessary for us. When we suffer much, it is because we have many attachments that should be cut off. We resist; we retard the divine operation; we repulse the salutary hand; and thus we have all to begin again: we should suffer less and come off cheaper, did we but deliver ourselves up without reserve to God.

Crosses are our daily bread: our soul has every day occasion for a certain portion, in order to detach it from itself, as the body stands in need of a certain quantity of food to nourish it. We stand in need of crosses, and should be destitute of all good, was not God careful to turn the life of this world into bitterness, to detach us from it.

The cross is never without its fruit, when we receive it in the spirit of sacrifice. We must accept it, adoring the hand of God, who lays it on us only for our sanctification. Blessed is he who is always ready, and never says, it is too much;

who counts not on himself, but on the Almighty; who desires no more consolation than God is willing to give him; and whose nourishment is the pure will of God.

There are in crosses so many marks of mercy, and so plentiful an harvest of graces for faithful souls, that if nature is afflicted, faith ought to rejoice. It is in the cross we find peace, by submission and the sacrifice of our purest pleasures. Thus far does God urge a soul to detach it from all that is not himself. What then is to be done, but to embrace the present cross, and suffer ourselves to be crucified? When he has thoroughly crucified, he comforts us; but does not, as the creatures do, give us poisonous comforts to nourish the venom of self-love: his comforts are pure and solid.

The peace that is experienced in submission, without any outward alleviation, is a great gift: by this God accustoms us to be exercised without being dejected. Though our too slothful and sensible nature should be cast down, our heart remains firm; it is a peace so much the purer as it is barren.

The consideration of the rights of God over his creatures, and that of our own wretchedness, which deserves nothing but humiliations and crosses, is the bread that ought to nourish us in

all trials. Let us suffer God to act; men can avail nothing: sometimes when all seems to be lost, all is in reality saved. God is pleased to cast us down, and raise us up again by his hand alone.

Happy are they who suffer, provided they do so willingly, and satisfy the righteousness of God! What do we not owe him, and in strict justice what severities do we not merit? An eternity of punishments changed into a few infirmities; the loss of God, the rage and despair of devils, changed into sufferings that are short and tranquil, where we adore the hand that through mercy strikes us! Such crosses deserve our thanks, and not our lamentations. They are favours which should soften our hearts by a sensibility of God's mercy in them. Does he cover us with a leprosy, he still is merciful: the leprosy of pride, sin, and self-idolatry is infinitely more terrible.

The crosses which we choose for ourselves, are scarcely any thing: it is God alone who knows how to crucify us.

The crosses which are sent by God, and under which he would have us bend, will not in themselves suppress our pride: it is only by a renunciation of our spirit in silence before God, that we shall become humbled and softened through his grace.

The crosses of an uneasy and anxious solicitude with regard to futurity, are not according to the will of God: we have no unction to support us in them; nor should we suffer them but through an infidelity which alienates us from grace, so that they are always bitter and insupportable, all is darkness, nor is there any resource; and the soul that would through curiosity taste this forbidden fruit, finds in it nothing but death and rebellion without consolation.

This is the effect of not trusting God, and daring to penetrate into those secrets of which he is jealous.

Let us then shut our eyes with regard to all that God conceals from us, and that he keeps in store in the treasures of his profound wisdom: let us adore without seeing: let us be silent: let us continue in peace. The crosses of the present moment always bring with them proportionable grace, and consequently their mitigation:—we then see the hand of God which manifests itself in them.

Jesus Christ says, "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."* The evil of each day is converted into good, when we suffer God to act. What are we that we should say to him: for what reason dost thou do this? He is the Lord, and

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* Matt. vi. 34.

that is sufficient. "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good:"* whether he raises us up or casts us down, whether he strikes or comforts us, whether he bruises us, or heals our wounds, whether he gives life or death, he is always the Lord; we are but his workmanship; and consequently the sport of his hands. What does it signify, so he is glorified, and his will accomplished in us? Our comfort ought to be the certainty that he wills our salvation.

Let us come out of ourselves; let us no longer love ourselves with a disorderly love, and the will of God, which will in all things unfold itself, will also comfort us every moment in whatever he brings to pass around us or in us. The contradictions of men, their inconstancy, nay even their injustice, will appear to us the effect of the wisdom, the righteousness, and the immutable goodness of God. We shall no longer see any thing but God infinitely good, who conceals himtelf under the foibles of blind and corrupted men. Thus this deceitful figure of the world, which passes like a scene in the theatre, will become a real spectacle, and worthy of eternal praises with regard to God.

What have we then to expect from men? They are weak, blind and inconstant: some of them

* 1. Sam. c. 18.

will not do what they can, and others cannot do what they would. Nature is a broken reed; if you lean on it, it bends, it cannot support us, and pierces our hand. As great as men appear, they are nothing in themselves, and only so far great as God is great in them, he causes the extravagance of humours, the chagrin of pride, disssimulation, vanity and every foolish passion, to serve to accomplish his eternal counsels with regard to his elect; he employs both inwardly and outwardly, the corruption of other men, our own imperfections and our own sensibility, in a word, he makes use of every thing to promote our sanctification: he shakes the heavens and the earth to save what is dear to him: nothing is done but to purify us, and render us worthy of him. Let us rejoice then, when our Heavenly Father tries us here below, with a variety of temptations both inward and outward, that he makes every thing oppose us outwardly, and pain us inwardly: let us rejoice, for it is by such afflictions, that our faith, more precious than gold, is purified. Let us rejoice, that we thus prove the delusion and emptiness of all that is not God; for it is by this crucifying experience, that we are torn from ourselves and the desires of the world: let us rejoice, for it is by these pains of child-birth, that the new man is born in us. What, shall we be discouraged when it is the hand of God that hastens to perform his work? this we every day wish that he may do, and yet the moment he begins to do it, we are

troubled; our sloth and impurities resist the hand of God. A piety without crosses is merely ideal.

Whilst we remain shut up in ourselves, we are exposed to the contradictions of men, to their malignity and injustice; our own humour exposes us to the humours of others; our passions clash with those of our neighbours; our pride, which is incompatible with his, foams like the waves of the troubled sea; every thing overcomes us; the sensibility of our passions and the jealousy of our pride, render us open to attacks from all sides; there is no peace or hope in ourselves, while we are at the mercy of a troop of covetous and insatiable desires, and while we know not how to content this *me* that is so jealous, so delicate, and so suspicious of every thing that touches it.

Hence it comes to pass, that in our intercourse with our neighbour, we are like a sick man who has languished a long time in bed: there is no part of his body but what is sore to the touch: diseased self-love is so softened by itself, it cannot bear to be touched, without crying out: upon the gentlest touch, it imagines its skin to be torn off. To this delicacy add the rudeness of a neighbour, so full of imperfections that he does not even know them himself, and likewise the reproaches of that neighbour against our imperfections, which are as great and offensive as his. Thus do all the sons of Adam punish each other; one half of them

is the cause of the others wretchedness, who, in their turn, render the others miserable; behold in all nations, all towns, all communities, all families, and even between two friends, the martyrdom of self-love.

The remedy by which peace is to be found, is to come out of self. We must renounce it, and sacrifice all self interest, that we may no longer have any thing more to love, to fear or to be solicitous about. It is then we taste the true *peace* reserved for *men of a good will*, that is to say, for such as have no other will but that of God, which becomes theirs. Then men can do no more to us; for they cannot lay hold of us either by our desires or fears: then we will all things, and will nothing: we are inaccessible to the enemy, we are invulnerable. Man has no power against us but what is given him by God, and that power being the will of God, is our's also. In this state we place our treasure so high that no hand can reach to deprive us of it. They may mangle our reputation, but we consent to it; for we know how good it is to be humbled when God humbles us. We are disappointed in friendship, so much the better: he is the only true friend who is jealous of all others, and who detaches us from them, to render our attachments more pure. We are harrassed, constrained and reduced to submission, but it is God that does it, and that is sufficient: we love the hand that bruises us, and we find peace

in all these troubles: blessed peace that attends us even to the cross! we will all that happens, and nothing else. The more perfect this resignation is, the more profound is our peace: if there still remain some attachments and some desires, our peace is imperfect: when all cords are broken, then there is unbounded liberty. Let disgrace, fall upon me, while I hear Jesus Christ who says to me, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that, have no more that they can do."* O how weak are they even when they deprive us of life! very contracted is that power which can only break an earthen vessel; that can only kill what of itself dies daily; they can hasten a little that death which is in fact a deliverance; after which we escape out of their hands into the bosom of God, where all is permanent peace.

We are in this world only to suffer; "Woe unto those that have their consolation in this world!"† they will not find it in the next. This life is the season of temptation and trials, to correct, purify and detach us: when we have no more to suffer, we shall no longer have occasion to live, as a patient when cured, is discharged from an hospital: it is only by suffering that our cure is effected.

We must never think of those who disquiet us,

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* Luke xii. 4. † Luke vi. 24.

but in order to forgive them. We must regard God in them, who makes use of them, to exercise our humility, our patience, and our love of the cross. We shall hereafter in the presence of God, see how useful they have been to us who have crucified us, by nailing us to the cross with Jesus Christ. The pains they cause will soon pass away, but the fruits resulting from them will be everlasting.

CHAP. XXVI.

On too great a Sensibility in Troubles.

This sensibility does not depend on ourselves, but is by our Creator interwoven with our constitution, in order to exercise our patience and resignation. Let us then enter into his designs. Temptations are necessary for us, but let us remember he always proportions them to our strength. Those within as well as those that are from without, all tend to crown us with victory, if we are faithful in the combat. Inward temptations are however more useful, as they more immediately humble us, and make us sensible of our inward corruption. Those from without only serve to show us the malignity of our neighbour, while those that proceed from within, make us sensible that we are as much depraved in our dispositions, as the rest of the world.

Let us then with an humble peaceful confidence, support all our inward rebellions, and all the temptations that spring from our own hearts, as well as the storms we encounter from others. All come alike from the hand of God, who knows how to make our passions as well as outward events conducive to our dying to self. Pride often renders us uneasy and dejected, at the experience of that inward opposition which proceeds from our passions, it wishes to have all in subjection, that it may glory in the combat, and behold with complacency its own perfection.

Let us then endeavour to be faithful by turning our will entirely to God, in spite of the strugglings and oppositions of nature; let us in all tempests commit ourselves to him, who means to show us by them, the shipwrecks to which we should be exposed, did not his almighty hand preserve us in them.

Should our frailty so far prevail as to make us voluntarily fall, then let us humble and correct ourselves severely, let us not lose a moment to return to God: but let this be done calmly and resolutely. Let us when fallen rise again, and vigorously renew our course, without vexation or being discouraged at the sight of our folly.

CHAP. XXVII.

The necessity of the purification of the Soul, with respect to the gifts of God, and especially that of Friendship.

God though apparently so severe, never causes any to suffer for the sake of suffering. He strikes only to heal. The severity of the operation proceeds only from the evil that must be torn away: he would make no incision, if all was sound: he only cuts that which is dead and ulcerated. It is then our corrupt self-love that becomes our tormentor, the hand of God deals as gently with us as possible. Judge therefore how deep and envenomed must our wounds be, since God is so tender of us, causes our sufferings to be so sharp.

Thus as he makes us suffer only in order to our cure, so he sometimes deprives us of his gifts, that he may restore them to us an hundred-fold. Through love he deprives us of the purest of his gifts, when we possess them impurely. The purer our gifts are, the more jealous is he of our appropriating or directing them to ourselves. The most eminent graces are the most deadly poisons, if we rest in them, and regard them with complacency. It is the sin of the fallen angels, they only turned to themselves, and regarded with complacency their state; at that instant they fell from heaven, and became the eternal enemies of God.

This example shews us how little men think of those sins which are the greatest of all; yet it is very rare to find a soul so pure as to possess the gifts of God with purity, without assuming a property in them. When they think of God's graces, it is always for themselves, and it is the love of self that almost constantly creates their affection for them. They are cast down when they find themselves weak, and alive again when they find themselves strong: they do not regard their own perfection as they would that of another, only for the glory of God. They are grieved and dejected when all sensible relish and perception of grace is taken from them: in short, it is *self* and not God that engrosses their thoughts.

From hence it comes to pass that all perceptible virtues have need to be purified, because they nourish the natural life in us. Corrupt nature can derive food even from those graces that are the most contrary to nature: self-love is fed, not only by austerities and humiliations, by fervent prayer and self-denial, but even by the purest self-dereliction and the greatest sacrifices: it is delighted to think it no longer trusts in any thing, and that in this dreadful trial it abandons itself faithfully and without reserve. But to complete our purification, we must sacrifice even the gifts of God. This must be done before the offering can be perfect: all must be given up; we must

even renounce the perception by which we reflect on having abandoned all.

Man does not find God perfectly, but in the loss of all his gifts, and in the real sacrifice of all that belongs to self. The infinite jealousy of God urges us so far, and our self-love compels him, as I may say, into the necessity of doing so; for we cannot lose ourselves totally in God, till all other support fails us. It is like a man falling into an abyss; he does not let himself fall, till every support escapes his hands; so self-love which God would precipitate, catches in despair at every shadow of grace, as a drowning man does at every straw he can lay hold of.

We ought therefore rightly to comprehend the necessity of this deprivation of God's grace, which by degrees purifies every divine gift; for there is not one, be it ever so exalted, that after having been the means of our advancement, does not in the end commonly prove a snare and an obstacle to us, by our imagined propriety in it, which sullies the soul; and for this reason God withdraws his favours.

But he takes not away his grace to deprive us of it for ever: he takes it only to restore it without that defiling appropriation which we, unknown to ourselves, had assumed in it. The loss of the gift serves to discover to us that it was not our own,

and being thus undeceived, it is restored an hundred-fold.

Then the gift is no longer considered as the gift of God, but as God himself in the soul. It is no longer considered as a gift, because it is no longer regarded as a thing distinct from God which the soul may possess. It is God himself which is now alone regarded, and without being possessed by the soul, possesses it according to all his good pleasure.

God's most usual manner of dealing with souls, is first to draw them to himself, by detaching them from the world and all gross passions, by making them taste the most fervent virtues, and the sweetness of simplicity. In this first sensible attraction, the whole soul turns itself to mortification and prayer. It incessantly opposes itself to, and gets loose from all outward consolations: even those of friendship are retrenched, because it feels in it the impurity of self-love, which considers the friend only with regard to self. It has no longer any friendships but such as are produced by conformity of sentiments, or such as charity or duty induce it to cultivate; all others it regards as a burden; or if it still retains its natural relish for them, is suspicious of the consequence of the friendship of such as have not the same taste for piety it feels in itself.

There are many poor souls who do not attain this state of fervour, nor taste these spiritual attractions: but then there are others whom God carries much farther, and whom he strips through jealousy, after having cloathed and adorned them. These fall into a state of dryness, disgust and languor, where every thing is burdensome to them. A soul in this state finds itself forsaken of God, and that all his gifts are fled: this is such an anguish to it, as throws it into a kind of despair, it becomes a burden to itself, and every thing disgusts it. God tears away all from it, nor are the pleasures of friendship excluded. Are we surprised at this? we may then be still more so, he even deprives us of all pleasure arising from the love of him or his holy law. At this period they know not whether he abides in them, the heart is withered away, and life itself almost extinct; they know not how to love any thing. The loss of that God whose sweetness they formerly experienced in the heat of their fervor, is so bitter to them, that it scatters wormwood upon all the creaturely objects of their affection. They are like a sick man, who for want of nourishment feels his weakness, and yet loaths the most exquisite aliments. Talk not then of friendship, the very name is afflicting, and brings tears into their eyes: every thing overwhelms them; they know not what to do. O thou poor soul! thou hast desires and afflictions like a child, you know not why, and which vanish like a dream on the bare men-

tion of them. What you say of your disposition appears to you a lie; for it ceases to be true, from the moment you begin to relate it; nothing subsists in you. You can answer nothing, nor promise yourself any thing, no, nor even describe your situation. You are, with regard to your sentiments, like the daughters of the visitation, with regard to their cells and their furniture; all is fluctuating, nothing is your's, and your heart less so than any thing else. It is not to be believed how much this puerile inconstancy lessens and destroys a soul, that was before wise, strong and proud in its own virtue. To speak at this time of the gifts of nature, natural tenderness, generosity, constancy, or gratitude to friends, while the sick soul is in this its agony; is like talking of music to a man on his death-bed. The heart is like a tree dried up even to the root.

But wait till the winter has passed by, and that God has killed all that ought to die in us: then shall the spring re-animate all: friendship with all other divine gifts, shall be restored an hundred-fold. They now feel their former inclination for true friends revive within them; they no longer love them in and for themselves, but in and for God, with a lively and tender friendship, accompanied with taste and sensibility; for God knows how to render the sensibility pure. It is not sensibility but self-love that corrupts our friendships. They now deliver themselves up to

the joys of chaste friendship, because it is God that makes the impression: they love through him without interruption: it is him they love in that which he has made lovely.

As we are by the order of providence linked to certain persons, so God binds us to them, by making them the objects of our affection; nor are we afraid to wish for a return, because that he who impresses the desire, renders it pure and without any wish of property in their affection. We wish to be loved, as we desire another should be loved, if it was the will of God. We look up to him without complacency in ourselves, and without self-interest. In this re-animated friendship, all is disinterested and without any regard to self. We can now without disgust perceive all the defectsof our friends and their friendship.

Before this purification, the most pious persons are exceptious, jealous and critically delicate in their friendships; because self-love is always afraid to lose, and greedy of gain, even in a commerce which is apparently the most generous and disinterested: if they do not seek to gain profit or honour by their friend, they at least seek the advantages arising from friendly intercourse, the consolation of esteem and confidence, the joy of reposing their heart in the bosom of their friend, which is the cordial of life, and in fine, the exquisite pleasure of disinterested affection. Take away this

consolation, disturb this friendship which seems so pure, and self-love is disconsolate. We lament, and would that others should lament with us; we are so out of temper with ourselves, as to be almost frantic: it is for self we are so vexed, which shows it was ourselves we loved in our friend. But when it is God we love in our friend, we are steady and unreserved. And even should the friendship be by the will of God dissolved, all is peace at the bottom of the soul: it has lost nothing, for it had nothing to lose, because it had already lost itself. If it grieves, it is for the person it loved, lest the rupture should be detrimental to him. As the friendship was fraught with sensibility, the pain may be lively and bitter; but still it is not destructive of peace, and is exempt from the smart, the vexation and chagrin of an interested affection.

There is yet another difference to be remarked, in that friendship which is exalted by the grace of God. The man who makes self the centre of all, can only have a limited friendship; his affections are always strained, and the greatest generosity this world can produce, has always limits which it cannot pass. If the glory of an uncommon love carries him far, he will likewise stop short when he attains it, or when by any accident he imagines this glory in danger of being hurt. But for those souls who really lose and forget themselves in God, their friendship is as immense as him in

whom they love. It is only the consideration of self that limits our heart, for God has given it a kind of immensity with regard to himself. Wherefore the soul that is not concerned for self, and accounts itself as nothing, finds in that nothing the immensity of God: it loves immeasurably, without end, without motive, because it is God who is love itself, that loves in it.

This was the state of the apostles, so well expressed by St. Paul: he felt all with an infinite purity and vivacity: he carried all the churches in his heart: an heart for which the whole universe was too little: he rejoices, he mourns, he is angry and he relents: his heart is the seat of all the strongest passions. He exalts, he abases himself: he has the authority of a father, and the tenderness of a mother: he would even be content to be anathematized to save his children: all these sentiments are impressed on him by God; and it is thus he will cause all those to love, who are not attached to themselves.

CHAP. XXVIII.

Of the internal operation of God, to bring Man back to the true end of his creation.

In the infancy of our spiritual life, God attacks us outwardly, to tear from us by degrees all the

creatures that we love too violently and contrary to his law. But this outward work, although necessary for the foundation of the edifice, constitutes but a very small part of it. The internal work, although invisible, is incomparably the greatest, most difficult and wonderful.

There comes a time, when God, after having stripped us, and mortified us by the creatures to which we were attached, attacks us inwardly, to tear us from ourselves. It is not foreign supports he then deprives us of, but that very self which was the centre of all our love. All the rest we only loved for self, and it is this self which God incessantly pursues. Strip a man naked, and you use him ill: but it is nothing in comparison to the tearing off his skin and leaving him no flesh to cover his bones. Cut off the branch of a tree, so far from killing it, you add strength to the sap, and you will see it bud with redoubled vigour, but attack the trunk, go to the root of it, and it will immediately languish, cast its leaves, and at length die. Thus would God have our old man completely killed.

As for the outward mortification of the senses, God effects it by enabling us to act courageously against ourselves. The more this courage vanquishes the senses, the more the soul sees her own virtue, and relies on her own strength. But in the sequel, God himself attacks the bottom of the

soul, and snatches it to himself, until the life of self is reduced to the last gasp. Then it is no longer the strength of the soul that combats outward objects, but by the weakness of the soul, God turns it against itself. It sees itself with horror, it continues faithful, but is no longer conscious of its fidelity. All the defects it ever had, present themselves to its view; and frequently new ones appear, of which it had no suspicion. It no longer finds in it self that resource of favour and courage which formerly supported it. It faints away, it is, as Jesus Christ sorrowful even unto death. All that remains in it is the will to hold by nothing but God, and to suffer him to act without resistance.

Even still, it has not the consolation to perceive in itself this will, which is simple, neither sensible nor reflected, but void of returns to self, and the more hidden it is, so much the greater is its depth in the soul. In this state, God fails not to do all that is necessary for detaching this person from himself. He strips him by degrees, and takes from him one after another every shred with which the old man was clad.

The last stripping, though not always the greatest, is notwithstanding the most vigorous. Though the robe should in itself be more precious than the inner garment, yet they are more sensible of the loss of the latter: when their outer

garments are taken from them, what remains supplies in some measure their place, and they wrap themselves the closer in them; but when the last is torn from them, there remains nothing, but nakedness, confusion and regret.

You will ask, perhaps, what are the things that God thus tears from men? but this is a question I cannot answer, they being as different as men are from one another. Each man has his peculiar sufferings, according to his necessities and the designs of God. How can any one know of what he shall be stripped, if he knows not with what he is clad? Each man is attached to a number of things that he never thought of; nor is he sensible of the attachment, until deprived of the beloved object. I feel not the hairs of my head until they are plucked from thence. God by degrees lays open the most inward recesses of our hearts, which were before unknown to us, and we are surprised to discover, even in our virtues, vices of which till now we believed ourselves incapable. It is like a cave apparently dry on all sides, which notwithstanding suddenly juts out water from places the least of all suspected.

God seldom deprives us of that which we might naturally suppose. Where we expect an attack we are prepared, and therefore such would not be proper for the destruction of self. God surprises us by ways the most unsuspected. They are per-

haps the merest trifles he deprives us of, but then they are trifles that self-love cannot bear to part with. This is not the season to exercise the great and shining virtues; these would support pride, and are therefore contrary to the design of God; they afford a certain strength and assurance, which would only be a means of making us lose ground. It is a simple and uniform conduct, in which there is nothing seemingly extraordinary, that God now requires. Spectators see nothing great in it, and the person himself is sensible of nothing but the operations of a weak relapsed nature; but he would a thousand times rather fast all his life on bread and water, and practice the greatest austerities, than suffer what now passes within him. Not that he has any ardour for austerities: no, that ardour is vanished; but he finds, in the compliance which God demands from him in small matters, more of renunciation and death to self, than in the greatest sacrifices. Nevertheless, God does not leave the soul at rest, until he has rendered it pliable and ductile, by turning and bending it on all sides. Sometimes it must speak with too much freedom, then be silent: sometimes be praised, then blamed, then forgotten, then accused again: sometimes elevated, at others debased: it must suffer itself to be condemned without saying a word in its own justification, at other times it must commend itself. It must acquiesce in finding itself weak, disquieted, wavering about trifles, and betraying all the froward

tempers of a child, shock its friends by its want of sensibility, and become causelessly jealous and suspicious; nay even reveal its most vile jealousies, to those very persons against whom it has conceived them; it must patiently and ingenuously converse, though in opposition to the taste of its company and its own disposition, without any advantage accruing from it; it must appear designing and unfaithful; finally, it must sometimes find itself languishing, forsaken of God, dissipated, and at such a distance from all holy tempers, that it is tempted to fall into despair. These are examples of such deprivations as I at present recollect: but there are many more which God suits to the necessities of each person and his own designs.

Let no one say, that these are vain enthusiastic imaginations. Can they doubt God's immediate operation on the soul? or that he does not so act as to destroy the life of self? Can they doubt that God after having mortified the grosser passions, does not attack all the subtile windings of self-love, especially in souls generously and without reserve devoted to the spirit of grace? The more he would purify them, the severer are their inward trials. The world can neither see nor understand these trials; but the world is blind, its wisdom si foolishness, it cannot agree with the Spirit of Truth; for as the Apostle says, "the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."

At first they are not accustomed to this inward work, which deprives the soul of every thing. They are very willing to be silent, to suffer all, to leave themselves to the direction of providence, as a man suffers himself to be carried by the stream: but they are afraid of hearkening to the internal voice that calls them to the sacrifice God has prepared. They are like young Samuel,* who not being accustomed to divine communication, thought when God called, it was the voice of Eli. Eli said to him, my son, it is a dream, lie down again, nobody called you. Just so, they know not but it may be some imagination which might lead them astray. Oft-times the high priest, that is to say, our spiritual guide tells us it is a dream, and that we ought to lie quiet: but God leaves us not so, he awakens us till we listen to what he has to say. If our internal voice, though attended with ever so wonderful circumstances, should direct us any thing contrary to the opinion of the church, we might with reason doubt it: but when God has wrought us up to a certain degree of detachment, and that afterwards we are convinced he requires of us certain innocent things, for this only purpose, that we may become more pure and dead to self: can there be any delusion in following these emotions? especially as I suppose them not followed without good advice. The opposition of our own wisdom and self-love to

* 1 Sam. iii. 4, &c.

these motions, sufficiently proves that they are from God, as it is evident that what prevents our obeying them, is some selfish sensibility. The more we fear to do these things, the more necessary they are: for our fear is owing to delicacy, an untractable humour, or an attachment to earthly views and satisfactions: but all these sentiments of the natural life must be extinguished. Thus all pretence for delay is removed by the innocence of the matters in question, and our inward conviction that they will conduce to the destruction of self.

A readiness and compliance in these motions, is of all other things the most advantageous to the soul. Those who have magnanimity enough not to hesitate, soon make an incredible progress. Others reason, and never fail to find some pretence to dispense with their following these motions: they would and would not: they wait for certainties: they seek such advice concerning their state, as may free them from doing what they fear to do, and at every step they look behind them: they languish in irresolution, and insensibly drive from them the Spirit of God. At first they grieve him by their hesitations, then provoke him by actual resistance, and lastly, extinguish him by reiterated disobedience.

This resistance of grace is always under the cover of divers pretences, which they find to au-

thorise it: but insensibly they lose the unction of the Holy One, and the simplicity of faith ;and notwithstanding all their endeavours to deceive themselves, they are not at peace: they have something at the bottom of their hearts which incessantly reproaches them with their neglect of God. But as the consequence of their neglect, is God's withdrawing from them his sacred checks and inspirations, so the soul every day becomes more hardened. It no longer tastes peace, nor does it seek the true kind: on the contrary, it is every day more alienated from it, by seeking it where it is not. It is like a dislocated bone, which though always painful while out of its proper place, yet does not endeavour to regain it, but on the contrary, fixes itself in its wrong situation. O how a soul is to be pitied, when it begins to reject the secret invitations of God, who requires that it should die to all! At first it is but an atom, but this atom becomes a mountain, and soon forms an impenetrable barrier between God and it. They become deaf to the calls of God, and are afraid to hear him: they wish they could say to him that they have not heard him: nay, they do say it, but he knows the contrary. They perplex themselves with doubts of all that was formerly most clear to them; and the graces which served before to render them most simple and ductile in the hands of God, begin now to appear like illusions. They now seek outwardly for the authority of guides to appease their inward tumult, and they

fail not to find it; for there are many who though wise and pious, have but little experience. In this state, all the remedies they use, only serve to strengthen the disease. They are like a wounded deer who carries in his haunches the arrow with which he is shot; the more he ranges the forest to free himself from it, the more he forces it into his body. Alas, "who is he that hath hardened himself against God and prospered?"* God who is himself the true peace, can he suffer that heart to be at rest, which opposes his designs? Then, they are like persons sick of unknown distempers; every physician employs his art to heal them, but all in vain. You see them dejected, sorrowful and languishing; neither food nor medicines can afford them any relief: they decay daily. Can we be surprised, that having forsaken the true road, they go every step further from it, incessantly straying more and more?

But you will perhaps say, the beginning of all these misfortunes was but a trifle. True, but then the consequences are fatal. Upon a slight and distant view there is nothing which, according to their imagination, they would not willingly sacrifice to God: but when God takes them at their word and accepts their offer, they feel a thousand repugnances which they did not so much as suspect. Their courage fails them, and they find a

* Job. ix. 4.

thousand excuses ready to flatter their weak inconstant hearts: at first they stop, and doubt whether they ought to proceed: then compromise the matter, and do only half of that which God requires: they mix with the divine operation, a certain self-motion, and dare not so contradict nature, as to extinguish all remains of lif e in the corrupt recesses of the heart. God, jealous of such a soul, withdraws his love. The soul begins to shut its eyes, that it may not see more than it has courage to perform. God abandons it to its cowardice and weakness, because it desires to be abandoned to them. But let us now consider the greatness of the fault, that provokes such dereliction.

The more the soul has received from God, the more it ought to return to him. It has received a preventing love and singular graces; it has tasted the gift of a pure and disinterested love which so many souls (otherwise pious) have never felt: God has spared nothing to render it his own. He is become its internal spouse, and has been careful to do every thing for it: but he is infinitely jealous. Let us not be surprised at the rigours of his jealousy. What is the object of it? is it talents, knowledge, or regularity in our outward conduct? No, he is condescending and easy with regard to these particulars. Love is only jealous of love: all his delicacy proceeds from the rectitude of his will. He cannot bear to receive from his spouse

only a divided heart, and is still more averse to the excuses with which she endeavours to deceive him, for thus dividing her affections. This it is that lights the consuming fire of his jealousy. While pure and ingenuous love conducts the soul, God will bear with an unbounded patience, all that through inadvertency or weakness is irregular in its conduct, without prejudice to the rectitude of its love: but the moment it refuses any thing to God, and endeavours to deceive itself by excusing such a refusal, God regards the soul as an unfaithful spouse who would conceal her infidelity.

How many souls are there, who after having performed great sacrifices, fall into these resistances! It is worldly wisdom that is the cause of almost all these misfortunes. It is not so much a want of courage, as too great a deference paid to human reason, that stops them in their course. It is true that God, when he calls souls to this state of sacrifice without reserve, deals with them in proportion to the unspeakable gifts with which he has laden them; they eagerly desire death, the cross, and self-renunciation: but then he is jealous of his gifts, because the excellence of them secretly nourishes in us a certain self-confidence, which must be destroyed; all must perish. As we have all from God, so God deprives us of all. If there is any thing to which we are attached, though seemingly ever so good, it is that against

which he raises his sword to cut it off from the most inward folds of the heart. If there is in us any part that is tender and fearful, it is there he besieges us, for he always attacks us in the weakest part. He pursues us, without suffering us to breathe: nor need this surprise us, as while we breathe it is impossible we can die. We are content that God should strike us dead, but then we would die without pain; we are willing to die to all self-will, but that same will must choose the manner how; we would lose all, and yet keep all. Alas, what agonies, what tortures, when God deprives us of our last resource! we faint away like a patient under a painful operation in the hands of a surgeon. But this comparison is nothing; for the operation of the surgeon is in the end to make us live, that of God to make us really die.

Poor weak souls, these last strokes overwhelm you; the very expectation makes you tremble and turn back. How many are there who never finish their journey through this frightful desert? scarce two or three shall see the promised land. Woe to those on whom God has waited, and whose conduct has not corresponded with his graces! Woe to those who inwardly resist this call! How shocking is this sin against the Holy Ghost! not to be forgiven in this world or that which is to come; yet what is this sin, but resisting the internal call of God? He who resists it, by refusing

to die entirely to self, and devote himself, without reserve to the grace of pure love, will be punished in this world by the stings of conscience, and in the next some dreadful purification will do that for him, which he would not do here for himself. We must be purified either here or hereafter: either by the inward martyrdom of pure love, or by some future unknown method. Happy he who courageously proceeds, fearful of nothing but of doing too little, who always loves better to exceed than to fall short in his severity against himself! Happy he who when only a pattern is required from him, freely gives the whole piece, and leaves it to God to cut it out as he pleases! Happy he who looking upon himself as nothing, never puts God to the necessity of compelling him! and happy he who is not terrified at all this!

We may imagine this state to be a grievous one, but we are mistaken; it is in it we find true peace and liberty; the heart when freed from all attachment to self, is enlarged immeasurably, so that it becomes immense; nothing now contracts it, and according to the promise it becomes one with God himself.

O my God, it is thou alone who art the author of this peace. The more the soul sacrifices itself without regard to worldly prudence or selfish considerations, the more freedom it gains. While it delays not to lose all, and forget itself, it possesses

all. It is true it is not a reflected possession, so that it can say to itself, "yes, I am in peace, and I live happy;" for that would be to seek and return to self, after having resigned it. It is a picture of the state of the blessed, who for ever will rejoice in God, without having one moment in all eternity to reflect on themselves and their own happiness. They are so transported in this happiness, that they will be eternally so, without ever appropriating it to themselves.

O thou lover of souls, thou givest to those who never resist thee, a fore-taste of that happiness. They wish for nothing, and yet they desire all. As it is only the creature that limits the heart, so the heart that is straitened neither by an attachment to the creatures, or itself, is, as I may say, entered into thy immensity. Nothing can hinder it, it loses itself daily more and more in thee; but though its capacity continually increases, thou never failest to fill it, it is always satisfied. It says not, I am happy, for that is not its concern. If it was, it could not be happy, for in that case it would still love itself. It possesses not its happiness, but its happiness possesses it. Ask it at any time, would you suffer what you do? or would you have any thing that you have not? it will without hesitation answer, that which I suffer, I would suffer, and what I have not, that I would be without: I am well pleased with every thing, and I wish for nothing.

O my God, this is the true worship in spirit and in truth. Thou seekest such worshippers as these; but alas, thou findest but few. Almost all seek themselves in thy gifts, instead of seeking thee in the cross and in poverty. They would conduct thee, instead of being conducted by thee. They give themselves to thee that they may become great; but retract the gift, when they find thou wouldst debase them. They pretend to be attached to nothing, yet are frighted at the smallest crosses. They desire to possess thee, but would not lose themselves to be possessed by thee. This is not loving thee, it is only wishing to be beloved by thee. O God, the creature knows not for what end it is created; teach him, O Lord, and impress this truth on the bottom of his heart, that the clay ought, without resistance, to let the potter give it what form he pleases.

CHAP. XXIX.

On Christian Perfection

Christian perfection has not in it that severity, that weariness, that restraint we imagine. It indeed requires that we should devote ourselves to God from the bottom of our hearts; but then when we are thus devoted unto God, all that we

do for him becomes easy. Those that with undivided hearts thus live to God, are always content; for they will nothing but what he wills, and would do all for him, that he would have them do; they strip themselves of every thing, and receive from him an hundred-fold reward. Peace of conscience, liberty of heart, the sweetness of being totally abandoned to God, the joy arising from the increasing light of God in their souls, and finally, a freedom from the fears and tyrannizing passions of the world, constitute that hundred-fold of happiness which the true children of God possess in the midst of crosses, if they are but faithful.

They sacrifice themselves, but it is to what they love best: they suffer, but then they are willing to do so, and prefer their present sufferings to all their past delusive joys: their bodies smart, their imaginations are troubled, and their spirits languish; but their wills are vigorous and quiet within them, and they cease not to say, Amen, to all the strokes of God.

What God demands of us, is an undivided will, that desires only what he desires, and rejects all that he rejects; that without any reservation wills all that he wills, and never, under any pretence whatever, wills contrary to him. When we are in this disposition, all is salutary, even amuse-

ments taken in this spirit are converted into good works.

Happy the man who thus gives himself to God. He is delivered from his passions, from the rash judgments of men, their malevolence and the tyranny of their maxims, from their cold and wretched railleries, from the calamities which the world attributes to chance, from the infidelity and inconstancy of friends, the snares and artifices of enemies, from his own weakness, from the miseries and shortness of life, from the horrors of a wicked death, from the cruel remorse attached to criminal pleasures, and lastly, from the eternal condemnation of God.

The Christian is delivered from the innumerable multitude of evils; seeing, that by placing his will in the hands of God, he wills no more than God wills: and thus he finds his consolation through faith, and consequently through hope, in the midst of all his sufferings.

What a weakness is it then to fear giving ourselves to God, or our engaging too far in a state so desirable?

Happy they who with closed eyes and an implicit faith, throw themselves into the arms of "the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort," as he

is called by St. Paul. Then they desire nothing more, than to know what they owe to God; and they fear nothing so much as not to see what he requires. When they receive fresh light from his law they are transported with joy, as a miser who has found a treasure.

The true Christian resigns himself to all the calamities that Providence is pleased to afflict him with, wills all that happens to him, and never wishes for what he has not: the more he loves God, the more absolute is his contentment; and the highest degree of perfection, far from oppressing him, renders his burden the lighter.

O the folly of fearing to be too much devoted to God! It is fearing to be too happy; it is fearing to be in all things too much attached to the will of God; it is fearing to support with too much fortitude our inevitable crosses; to derive too much consolation from the love of God, and to be too much disengaged from those passions that render us miserable.

Let us then despise all earthly things, that we may be entirely at the disposal of God. I do not say that we should part with them absolutely: for when our lives are regular and honest, there is little more to be done, than to change the inward affections of our souls: externally our actions will

be nearly the same; for God does not subvert the different conditions of life, nor require us to abandon those employments in which he himself has placed us: the chief difference will consist in this, that we shall now do to please God, what we formerly did to please the world and ourselves; and instead of being devoured by our pride, our tyrrannic passions, and the malicious censures of the world, we shall on the contrary act with freedom, courage, and confidence in God: our hope will animate us, we shall be supported in the midst of all our distresses, by the expectation of that everlasting happiness which daily approaches, while all earthly joys as fast fly from us: the love of God will make us sensible of his love for us, will give us wings to fly in his ways, and raise us above all our calamities. If this is difficult to be believed, experience will convince us of it; "come taste and see," says David, "how gracious the Lord is."*

The Son of God says to all christians without exception; "If any man will be my disciple, let him take up his cross and follow me:"† the broad way leadeth to destruction; we must follow the straight way where the few enter. None but such as lay great restraint on themselves, can win the kingdom of heaven. They must be born again,

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* Psalm xxxiv. 9. † Matt. xvi. 24.

become as little children, hate and renounce themselves, be poor in spirit, mourn in order to be comforted, and be no longer of this world, which is accursed by reason of its offences.

These truths alarm many people, because they see plainly what religion requires, without knowing what it bestows, and are ignorant of that spirit of love which eases every burden. They know not that this religion leads us to the highest perfection, by giving us through the love of God, a peace which softens all the calamities of life.

Those that with undivided hearts devote themselves to God, are always happy, they prove the truth of this divine saying, that "the yoke of Jesus "Christ is easy, his burden light, that in him the "soul finds rest, and that according to his promise, "he refreshes all that are weary and heavy laden."* But what dreadful woe attends those slothful and timorous souls that are divided between God and the world! They are unstable and irresolute. They are at the same time torn by their passions and their remorses: they are afraid both of the judgments of God and of man: they are terrified at the evil, and ashamed of the good: they have all the sufferings of virtue, without tasting its consolations. O, if they had sufficient courage to

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* Matt. xi. 29. 30.

despise the vain discourse, insipid railleries, and rash censures of men, what peace would they not taste in the bosom of their God?

How dangerous to our salvation, how unworthy of God and ourselves, how pernicious even to the peace of our mind, is it to wish to linger here. Our whole life is only given us, that we may march with hasty steps towards our heavenly country: the world vanishes as a vain shadow, and eternity advances to receive us: why do we then delay to march? whilst the light of the Father of mercies shines on us, let us hasten to arrive at the heavenly Canaan.

The first commandment is alone sufficient to banish all pretences we can make, to have any reserve towards God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, with all thy strength, and with all thy mind." Behold how many expressions are by the Holy Spirit here united, to prevent that reservation which the soul would willingly make, to the prejudice of that love which is jealous not only of all the extent and strength of the heart, but also of the whole application of the mind. Now how can any one imagine that he loves God, if he does not resolve to meditate on his law, and apply himself immediately to the accomplishment of his holy will?

Those who are afraid to see too clearly what his will requires, are far from this watchful and attentive love.

There is but one way of loving God, which is not to take any step but with him and for him, and to follow with a grateful heart all his inspirations.

Those who are under pious restraints, but yet would gladly follow the world a little, thinking that to do so is but a trifle; are notwithstanding in great danger of being of the number of those lukewarm Christians, of whom the Spirit says that God will "spew them out of his mouth."*

God impatiently bears with such slothful servants as say in their hearts, thus far will I go, but no further. Does it belong to the creature, to set bounds to the Creator? what would a master say to his servant, or a king to his subjects, that served him after this manner, who were fearful of being devoted too much to his service or interest, and who would blush to have their attachment appear to the world? what then shall the King of kings say if we imitate these base servants? The time approaches, it will soon arrive; let us hasten to prevent it; let us love the everlasting beauty

* Rev. iii. 16.

which never decays, nor will suffer such as love it to decay. Have we not seen, within these few years, persons in the most exalted stations, surprised by death, and sunk into the everlasting abyss? This world to which we are so much attached, we are just on the point of leaving; and what is it in itself, but misery, vanity and folly? it is a phantom, and "the fashion of it," as St. Paul says, "passes away."

END OF VOL. I.